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THE

WORKS

Of the late

Reverend and Learned

Mr. *Joseph Stennett.*

VOL. II.

Containing Fifteen SERMONS never before publish'd.

LONDON:
Printed in the YEAR M.DCC.XXXI.

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

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PROPERTY OF PRINCETON

SERMON I.

Preach'd before an

ASSEMBLY of MINISTERS,
at *Joiners-Hall*, on *March* 25, 1706.

PHIL. ii. 21.

For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

WHEN christianity was first planted in the world, that great principle of it, which our Saviour so frequently inculcated on his disciples, namely, that it was necessary *to deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow him* [a], was not only readily entertained in their minds, but appeared in the whole course of their lives: they seemed to be so intirely taken up with

[a] Luke 9. 23.

the ſervice of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to whom they own'd they had the greateſt obligations; and their minds were ſo thorowly imbued with charity, that bond of perfection, and moſt eminent badge of chriſtianity, that they thought nothing too much to do for the publick ſervice and intereſt of the chriſtian church. As they were ready to lay down their lives for the ſake of the Lord Jeſus, and were even ambitious of the crown of martyrdom; ſo they were ready to ſpend their eſtates, and hazard their lives too, for the ſervice of the brethren, and for the advancement of their true intereſt and edification. Not only the miniſters, but the people in general were engaged in this good deſign, and inſpired with this generous temper; they ſeemed all to mind the ſame thing, and each of them to loſe his own intereſt in that of the chriſtian community. The miniſters thought no labour too hard to be ſuſtained, no ſufferings too great to be endured, provided they might bring honour to the name of Chriſt, and be ſerviceable to his church. Thus our apoſtle, a little before the words of our text, generouſly declares to the Philippians, that if he were *offered upon the ſacrifice and ſervice of their faith, he ſhould joy and rejoice with them all* [b]: he was willing, for the promotion of the intereſt of their ſouls, to expoſe himſelf to the greateſt hazards and

[b] Ver. 17.

ſuffer-

sufferings; and if it had been possible or lawful, he could even have *wished himself accursed from Christ* [c], to have been under the most severe anathema, if this would have contributed to the salvation of the Jews. The people, in imitation of this noble pattern of their ministers, were so forward to advance the name of Christ, and to promote the common interest of religion, that, if it had been possible, they would have *pluck'd out their eyes and given them to them* [d]; and to save their lives, were *willing to lay down their own necks* [e]: so much were they bent to promote the good of the publick; and so earnestly did they desire the propagation of the gospel, that they would have been glad to have preserv'd those lives, which were most necessary to this end, at the expence of their own blood. And for defraying the extraordinary charge which attended the first publication of the christian religion, as well as for the support of their necessitous brethren under the difficulties and persecutions which were then so common to them; it was usual for those who had estates in land or houses, to sell them [f], and to put the money into a publick fund, to carry on the same good design of advancing the true religion in the world.

[c] Rom. 9. 3.
[d] Gal. 4. 15.
[e] Rom. 16. 4.
[f] Acts 4. 34——37.

But it was not long that this generous temper of mind reign'd univerſally among chriſtians: Satan ſoon ſowed tares among the wheat; hypocrites introduced themſelves by a ſpecious profeſſion into the chriſtian communities; and in a little time great numbers in the church appeared to be quite of another diſpoſition. So that the apoſtle had occaſion to complain of the narrowneſs of their ſpirits, and of their ſenſuality; of their ſupine neglect of the things of religion, while they took care, on the contrary, to indulge themſelves in the enjoyment of ſenſible things. Therefore in ſpeaking to theſe Philippians he uſes theſe pathetick words: *For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the croſs of Chriſt; whoſe end is deſtruction, whoſe God is their belly, and whoſe glory is in their ſhame; who mind earthly things* [g]. And in the words of our text he laments that *all ſought their own things, and not the things of Jeſus Chriſt:* not that they were univerſally become ſo corrupt and degenerate; but this unhappy temper ſo generally obtain'd amongſt them, that it was rare to find a man ſo generous and diſintereſted, and who had ſo pure and ſingle a regard to the honour of God and the good of the publick, that it might be truly ſaid of him that *he ſought the things of Chriſt, and diſregarded his own.* Some inſtances indeed there might be found, but

[g] Phil. 3. 18, 19.

they

they were not common. The apostle mentions one in his son Timothy, in whose commendation he speaks in this chapter: *But I trust*, says he, *in the Lord Jesus, to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state* [h]. i. e. "I have no man with "me in whom I can so confide, or that hath "so tender a regard to you, and so natural a "sympathy; that is touched with all your "afflictions, and lays to heart all your con-"cerns. I have no man like-minded, I can "hardly find a man of his temper and excellent "spirit:" *For all*, that is, the generality, *seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*

This is a very sad complaint of the apostle, and added affliction, to be sure, to his bonds: for he was now a prisoner at Rome, and wrote to these Philippians with the greatest tenderness and compassion that was possible for a man to express; tho at the same time he took occasion to censure them for those irregularities which were among them. And it seems very probable, that the apostle does not only in these words reflect upon those christians who were with him at Rome, of whom he could hardly find a man fit to be sent to Philippi, who would have a tender and natural care for their state; but that he insinuates, after his genteel manner, that there were among these Philippians, as well as

[h] Ver. 19, 20.

other churches, too many who too intenſely minded *their own things*, while they neglected the *things that were Jeſus Chriſt's*.

In treating on theſe words, I ſhall,

I. Inquire what it is for men *to ſeek their own things*; and what *to ſeek the things of Jeſus Chriſt*.

II. I ſhall inquire into ſome of the main cauſes which ſo commonly diſpoſe men, even chriſtians, *to ſeek their own things, and not the things of Chriſt*.

III. I ſhall ſhew the reaſons why we ſhould *ſeek the things of Chriſt* rather than *our own*; and the unreaſonableneſs of the contrary procedure.

I. We are to inquire what it is for men to *ſeek their own things, and not the things of Chriſt*. And here we muſt conſider, firſt, what is meant by *our own things, and the things of Chriſt* which are oppoſed to our own; and then what is meant by *ſeeking our own things*, in oppoſition to thoſe of Chriſt.

1. What is meant by *our own things*, and by *the things of Chriſt*. This conciſe manner of expreſſion is common to the apoſtle Paul; and there is a beauty and elegancy in this comprehenſive way of ſpeaking. *Our own things* may either ſignify *human things*, thoſe things which belong to our temporal ſtate, and the accommodation of human life in this world, in oppoſition to *the things of Chriſt*,

Chriſt, that is, divine things which regard our ſpiritual and everlaſting intereſt: or, *our own things*, as oppos'd to *the things of Chriſt*, may ſignify our own private intereſt and advantage, in oppoſition to the intereſt of Chriſt, and to the publick advantage of his church.

If we interpret the words in the former ſenſe, we find there are like expreſſions in the new teſtament. When our Saviour rebukes Peter, becauſe he would have perſuaded him to ſecure himſelf from the ſufferings of the croſs, he uſes theſe terms; *Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God, but thoſe that be of men*[i]: q. d. "Thou ſeemeſt to have no reliſh for ſome of thoſe divine truths which are agreeable to the nature of God, and eſſential to the chriſtian religion; for ſuch are thoſe that relate to my crucifixion: but thou reaſoneſt from the ſentiments of human nature, and the principles of human policy, to perſuade me to avoid the ſufferings of the croſs. Thou art taken with the things of this world, and art projecting how I may immediately obtain a temporal kingdom, and that without ſuffering; and art diſguſted with the ſcheme of things which the divine wiſdom has conſtituted, by which I am appointed firſt to ſuffer, and ſo to enter into my glory; into a kingdom as far above the idea thou haſt form'd in thy mind, as heaven is above the earth."

[i] Mat. 16. 23.

Again, *What man*, ſays our apoſtle to the Corinthians, *knoweth the things of a man, ſave the ſpirit of a man which is in him? even ſo the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God* [k]. Here the truths of chriſtianity are called *the things of God*, and *the things of the ſpirit of God* [l], in oppoſition to the *things of a man*; that is, to the ſentiments and notions of men. *What man knows the things of a man*; that is, the notions, the ſentiments and projects which paſs in the mind of a man, *but the ſpirit of a man that is in him?* who is conſcious to his own thoughts: ſo *the things of God*, the great truths of the chriſtian religion, the counſels of God relating to our ſalvation, *are known to none but the Spirit of God*, or thoſe to whom that Spirit ſhall reveal them. The ſame apoſtle ſpeaks in like manner in another place: *But I would have you without carefulneſs: he that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may pleaſe the Lord*; *but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may pleaſe his wife* [m]. Where the apoſtle deſigns to ſhew, that thoſe who were in an unmarried ſtate, at that time eſpecially, when chriſtianity was firſt planted in the world, had greater opportunity to mind religion, and the affairs of their ſouls, than thoſe perſons who were married, and conſequently incumbred with the cares of

[k] 1 Cor. 2. 11.
[l] Ver. 14.
[m] 1 Cor. 7. 32.

this

this world, and taken up with the things of this life. So that here temporal things, which belong to human life, are opposed to *the things of the Lord*; that is, the things of religion. According to this account therefore, the sense of the words is this: "*All* "*seek their own things*, i. e. to gratify their "own thoughts, to accomplish their own "designs and projects; are fond of their "own notions and sentiments; seek their "own temporal satisfaction in the things "which belong to this life, the things of "this world: *and none seek the things of* "*Christ*; i. e. none are so concern'd as they "ought to be for the advancement of divine "truth, and for the propagation of religion "in the world."

If we interpret these words as opposing our own private advantage to the publick interest of religion, you will find there are like phrases also used in the holy scripture to justify this interpretation. The apostle is recommending a publick spirit as one of the excellent characters of a mind in which christian charity reigns, in opposition to a narrow and selfish disposition, when he says, *Charity doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own* [n], &c. that is, a man inspired with charity is more concerned and employed about the advantage of the publick than about his own private interest. And this is true of charity, not only as it disposes men to em-

[n] 1 Cor. 13. 5.

ploy

ploy their money for the benefit of others, as well as of themſelves; but as it is a virtue which makes men diſintereſted on many other accounts, ſo as to prefer the publick good to any particular intereſt of their own.

Our apoſtle, in this chapter wherein is our text, hath a phraſe which may give us yet more light into this matter: *Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others* [o], &c. Some think the meaning of theſe words is, that we ſhould not turn our eyes ſo much on our own gifts and abilities, and ſo determine our thoughts to ourſelves, as to overlook the good qualities of others; leſt for want of duly conſidering what God hath beſtowed on others, we ſhould be tempted to over-value ourſelves: becauſe the apoſtle had ſaid in the words before, *Let nothing be done thro' ſtrife and vain-glory; but in lowlineſs of mind let each eſteem others better than themſelves* [p]. But others interpret theſe words by thoſe which follow: *Look not every man on his own things*; that is, be not ſo much concerned about your own private intereſt as about the affairs of others, ſo as to promote a common good; becauſe it follows, *Let the ſame mind be in you which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus*: i. e. aſpire to be like your Saviour, and imitate his generous example; *who humbled himſelf, and became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs* [q], merely for the benefit of others, and of ſuch

[o] Phil. 2. 4.
[p] Ver. 3.
[q] Ver. 5, 9.

who

who were intirely unworthy of his favour. If we underſtand the words in the laſt ſenſe, then they are agreeable to the purpoſe ſpoken of before: if in the former ſenſe, then they ſhew we are not to content ourſelves in ſeeking the advancement of our own knowledge, the improvement of our own minds, and the acquiſition of ſuch abilities as may render us valuable in the world; but we ſhould prefer to this the deſire of being uſeful and ſerviceable to the ſouls of other men. It is not ſufficient that we cultivate our own minds, and advance in knowledge and learning, unleſs the talents we acquire be improved for the publick good.

Yet farther; the apoſtle ſpeaks for a publick ſpirit and temper, even ſo far as to aſſure us that we are not to ſeek only the ſatisfaction and eaſe of our own conſciences, and to ſee that all we do be innocent and blameleſs; but that this care of our own ſouls ſhould be managed after ſuch a manner as to prevent the offence of others. So he writes to the Corinthians: *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not* [r]. As much as to ſay, I ought to forbear ſome things which are lawful, if they are inexpedient and contrary to the welfare of my neighbours: and he immediately ſubjoins, *Let no man ſeek his own, but every man another's welfare* [f]. The queſtion the apoſtle was deba-

[r] 1 Cor. 10. 23. | [f] Ver. 24.

ting,

ting, was about eating things ſacrificed to idols. Some chriſtians, without any regard to the idols, could eat things ſacrificed to them with a ſafe conſcience, and without ſuperſtition: but becauſe this was likely to be injurious to the tender conſciences of other chriſtians who were weak, as well as to confirm the heathens in their idolatry, the apoſtle adviſes them to avoid all occaſion of ſcandal; and therefore ſays, *If any of them that believe not bid you to a feaſt, and ye be diſpoſed to go, whatſoever is ſet before you, eat, asking no queſtion for conſcience-ſake*; i. e. not asking whether it were offered to idols or not. *But if any man ſay unto you, this is offered in ſacrifice to idols, eat not, for his ſake that ſhewed it, and for conſcience-ſake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof. Conſcience I ſay, not thy own, but of the others*[s]: i. e. "Thou art ſatisfied in thy "own conſcience that thou mayſt lawfully "eat without ſuperſtition: but have ſome "regard to the conſcience of the others; "that is, of the weak chriſtian, who thinks "this unlawful, and therefore is offended at "it; and of the zealous Jew, who will in"terpret this liberty a compliance with ido"latry, and ſo be ſcandalized at the chriſtian "religion; and of the ignorant and ſuper"ſtitious Gentile, who ſeeing thee eat what "thou know'ſt was ſacrificed to an idol, "imagines thou haſt ſome reſpect to that

[s] Ver. 27, 28, 29.

"idol,

" idol, and ſo is confirmed in his idolatry " and ſuperſtition." Therefore, adds the apoſtle, *Give no offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God. Even as I pleaſe all men in all things; not ſeeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be ſaved* [t].

The apoſtle ſpeaks after the ſame manner to the Romans: *We then that are ſtrong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe ourſelves* [u]; i. e. not to ſeek our own eaſe and ſatisfaction only, but the good of others: *Let every one of us pleaſe his neighbour for his good to edification* [v]. And this he preſſes by the moſt glorious example of it that ever was in the world: *For even Chriſt*, ſays he, *pleaſed not himſelf; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me* [w]. Chriſt pleaſed not himſelf, but expoſed himſelf to all manner of afflictions and ſufferings for the ſake of others.

Therefore by the account you have now heard, from parallel places, the apoſtle in our text may be ſuppoſed to complain that there were many chriſtians who had a greater regard to their own temporal intereſt, to their own reputation and honour, to their own eaſe and pleaſure, than to the intereſt and honour of Chriſt and his church; and many who ſought only the improvement of their own minds, the liberty, ſatisfaction, and peace of their own conſciences; but did

[t] Ver. 32, 33.
[u] Rom. 15. 1.
[v] Ver. 2.
[w] Ver. 3.

not

not ſufficiently regard the name and honour of our Lord Jeſus, and the advancement of his intereſt and religion in the world; whereas they ought to have been of the ſame generous ſpirit with the apoſtle Paul, and with Moſes, who would have expoſed themſelves to ſuffer any thing which was poſſible for man to endure, for the advantage of the people of God and the glory of his name. For as Paul could even have wiſhed himſelf anathematized, rather than his kindred and nation ſhould periſh in their infidelity and oppoſition to the chriſtian religion [x], of which he was ſo zealous a preacher; ſo Moſes ſpeaks after the ſame manner concerning his life: *Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou haſt written, if thou wilt forgive their ſins* [y]. He would be cut off for the ſake of his brethren: he ſought not the intereſt of his own family and the honour of his name, but the glory of God and the good of his church: he would therefore rather *be blotted out of the book of life*, rather be cut off and loſe the proſpect of becoming a mighty nation, than the people under his charge ſhould be cut off. *He ſought not his own things.* And if we will rightly apply the expreſſion, we muſt extend it not only to our perſons and our families, but to the particular communities or ſocieties to which we belong. As we are not eſpecially to prefer our own perſonal advantage, our own tem-

[x] Rom. 9. 3.

[y] Exod. 32. 32.

poral eaſe, honour and profit to the publick intereſt of religion; ſo we are not ſo to ſeek the good of our own families as to neglect that which is of greater moment in itſelf, the good of the church of God, and the honour of the name of Chriſt: nor are we to conſult the intereſt of one particular church or ſociety of chriſtians, ſo as to be negligent about the ſtate of religion, and the honour and intereſt of Chriſt in other chriſtian communities. Our Saviour hath taught us to call all men our neighbours; and the chriſtian religion teaches us to call all chriſtians our brethren. Therefore leſſer differences in regard to the ſentiments of our minds will not diſcharge us from the obligations we are under, *to ſeek the things of Chriſt*, the intereſt of chriſtianity and of chriſtians in general. But,

2. Let us conſider what the apoſtle means by *ſeeking our own things* in oppoſition to *the things of Chriſt*. The apoſtle does not hereby intend to hinder us from conſulting our own true intereſt: that would have been unreaſonable, and it would moreover have been vain. It would have been unreaſonable; for there is no man but from the principles of nature loves himſelf, and ſeeks his own intereſt: it would have been in vain; becauſe it is ſo natural and neceſſary to us, that it is impoſſible for us to diveſt ourſelves of that principle which diſpoſes us to ſeek our own profit and advantage. And the chriſtian religion does not deſign, by commanding ſelf-denial,

denial, to root this principle out of our minds, but to correct a diſorderly ſelf-love; to regulate and govern us after ſuch a manner, that as we ſeek ourſelves regularly, ſo likewiſe we may be employed in ſeeking the intereſt of others; that we may not only conſult *our own things*, but *the things of others*, and eſpecially the things of Chriſt, the things of the chriſtian religion, which belong ſo much to the honour and glory of God. The law of God, as inforced by chriſtianity, requires that we ſhould *love our neighbour as ourſelves* [z]. It allows us therefore to love ourſelves, and beyond all doubt it is our duty ſo to do; but it muſt be with a regular love, conſiſtent with love to our neighbour, and with the regard we owe to the honour of God.

The apoſtle's intention is not to deny us what we ſhould eat and drink, and what we ſhould put on, and what we ſhould provide for our own families: for this he enjoined and commanded by authority from his great maſter, that *if any man would not work, neither ſhould he eat* [a]; and declared, *If any provide not for his own, and eſpecially for thoſe of his own houſe, he hath denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel* [b]. "He hath in effect "denied chriſtianity by ſo irregular a con- "verſation; for he hath renounced natural "religion to that degree, that even infidels

[z] Mat. 22. 39.
[a] 2 Theſ. 3. 10.
[b] 1 Tim. 5. 8.

"would

" would scorn to be so negligent of a duty " they owe to their families." Religion does not hinder us from industry, but does encourage it: and we are to use all lawful endeavours to procure the things of human life, not only for ourselves, but for the sake of others; that we may be helpful to the poor in their necessities, and be serviceable to the common interest of religion. But when the apostle complained, *all sought their own and not the things of Jesus Christ*, it is certain he complained of those who so *regarded their own things, as to neglect the things of Jesus Christ*; so regarded their own reputation and honour, their own temporal interest and advantage, or the improvement of their own minds in knowledge and understanding, as to neglect the pursuit of those things which might tend to the common edification, to the glory of Christ and religion. For men to make themselves their only end, their last end, to seek only themselves; this is to renounce the honour and homage they owe to God, and the duty they owe to other men: this is to renounce the greatest part of the divine requirements; and is so far from tending to their own best advantage, that it is the way to destroy their temporal interest itself, as at long run will appear, how diligently soever it hath been consulted. To promote the interest of religion and the publick good, is certainly the best way to obtain temporal blessings.

The apoſtle blames thoſe who ſeek only their own intereſt, not at all *the things of Chriſt*; or thoſe who chiefly ſeek *their own things*, and prefer them to *the things of* our Lord Jeſus *Chriſt*; who are eager and diligent, and induſtrious in purſuit of the things of this world, but are careleſs and negligent and cold, when they are to do any thing for the publick cauſe of religion and the ſervice of Jeſus Chriſt; who can project and contrive how they may advance their own families and promote their own intereſt, but have no thought or conſideration, or if they have, it is but little, for the intereſt of Jeſus Chriſt, and how religion may be promoted in the world. Thoſe who inordinately purſue the things of this world, and neglect the publick intereſt of the church of Chriſt and the honour of his name, may very juſtly be ſaid *to ſeek their own things, and not the things of Jeſus Chriſt.* And the apoſtle complains of ſuch as ſought the one only and not the other; or ſought their own intereſt chiefly, whereas they ought to have poſtpon'd this to the publick good and advantage. And this is not at all unreaſonable; for while we ſeek the publick intereſt, we really advance our own after the moſt effectual manner. But I proceed,

II. To conſider the cauſes of this great irregularity; and to inquire what are the things which ſo commonly diſpoſe men, even

christians, *to seek their own things, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*

I shall not undertake to enumerate them all; but shall speak of some of the main causes or occasions of mens *consulting their own things* in opposition to *the things of Christ.*

1. One grand cause of this evil, is conversing too much with earthly objects, and thereby suffering them to have too great an influence upon the heart. Earthly things have indeed this great advantage towards the gaining our affections, that they are near, that they are in possession, and are sensible; whereas the felicities of a future state, in the view whereof it becomes us *to seek the things of Jesus Christ*, are at a distance, are the objects of our faith and hope, and not in present possession. But it is very certain, that we act contrary to the rules and precepts of Christ's doctrine, as well as to the glorious views it sets before us, if we so converse with earthly objects, as to let them get the ascendent in our affections. When christians have not learned to *deny themselves* [c], to *put off the old man with his deeds* [d], and to *die to this world* [e]; they soon dishonour the profession they make of the name of Christ: and tho they may seem to abandon the world, they will look back with regret upon it, and take occasion of declining into the paths of vice. *To love the things of this world*, is a very sad

[c] Mark 8. 34.
[d] Col. 3. 9.
[e] Gal. 6. 14.

ſign. *Love not the world, neither the things of the world; for he that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him* [f]. If this prevail and obtain over his mind to a great degree, it will ſtifle the ſentiments of religion, and make him neglect the things of Chriſt. A man who is eagerly ſet upon ſenſuality and covetouſneſs, is thereby utterly indiſpoſed for *ſeeking the things of Jeſus Chriſt.* If he is a *lover of pleaſure more than a lover of God* [g], how ſhall he heartily ſet about promoting the intereſts of God's kingdom among men? And as for covetouſneſs, the apoſtle aſſures us, that *the love of money is the root of all evil* [h].

It was this, of which the apoſtle complained, when he ſaid, *Demas hath forſaken us, having loved this preſent world* [i]: q. d. "He hath other things to mind now, and "ſo diſregards religion, and the intereſt and "honour of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt." It was covetouſneſs which made Ananias, tho he would pretend to be ſerviceable to the publick, deny a part of that which he had offered to God, and profeſſed he would beſtow for carrying on the common cauſe. It was this which made him *lye to the holy Spirit*, when he was charged with the fact [k]; and coſt him his life, as an exemplary puniſhment. It was covetouſneſs which made Simon Magus

[f] 1 John 2. 15.
[g] 2 Tim. 3. 4.
[h] 1 Tim. 6. 10.
[i] 2 Tim. 4. 10.
[k] Acts 5.

deſirous

deſirous of the gifts of the holy Spirit. He wanted to have the ſame power which the apoſtles had; *that on whomſoever he laid his hands, they might receive the holy Ghoſt* [l]. And he would have given them money to obtain that of them, which he thought he could make money of again; and by which he ſuppoſed he ſhould advance his own name and reputation. But what ſaid the apoſtle? *Thy money periſh with thee, becauſe thou haſt thought that the gift of God may be purchaſed with money. Thou haſt neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the ſight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedneſs, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity* [m].

How many good deſigns might be carried on for the intereſt of religion, if men had hearts like thoſe of the primitive chriſtians? I do not mean that chriſtians now are required to put all into a common bank, as they did, for the promoting of the cauſe of Chriſt moſt advantageouſly in the primitive times; but if they had a temper and ſpirit any thing like theirs, how mightily would they be concerned for the advancement of truth and holineſs in the world, and for the relief of the poor and diſtreſſed members of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt? This narrowneſs of

[l] Acts 8. 19. | [m] Ver. 20——23.

ſpirit, I ſay, proceeds from covetouſneſs and ſenſuality. Men are unwilling to part with that which furniſhes them with the means of obtaining ſenſual pleaſures, and promoting their own families; whereas they do not conſider this is the way *to lay up treaſure in heaven* [n]; this is the way to lay up bleſſings for their families, the much more effectual way to make a plentiful and laſting proviſion for them, than can be done by the moſt avaritious methods a covetous mind can contrive. Covetouſneſs is, by the apoſtle, called *idolatry* [o]; and when men *ſerve mammon*, it is no wonder that they forget God. *They cannot ſerve two maſters*; if one be attended, the other muſt be neglected: as our Saviour ſays, *Ye cannot ſerve God and mammon* [p]. If men are ſo devoted to themſelves that they ſeek only to raiſe eſtates for themſelves and their poſterity, they muſt needs neglect the affairs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the common intereſt of his church.

This is ſo intolerable in miniſters, that it is made one caution, when the qualifications of a miniſter are given in ſcripture, that whoſoever is choſen to the office of an elder, muſt be one who is *not given to filthy lucre* [q], muſt be *a lover of hoſpitality* [r]; otherwiſe inſtead of *adorning the doctrine of God his Saviour* [s], he would diſhonour religion, and

[n] Mat. 6. 20.
[o] Col. 3. 5.
[p] Mat. 6. 24.
[q] Tit. 1. 7.
[r] Ver. 8.
[s] Tit. 2. 10.

bring

bring a diſcredit and diſreputation upon the goſpel which he preaches.

And as covetouſneſs is contrary to that direction which is given for the choice of miniſters; ſo likewiſe there is a multitude of paſſages in the new teſtament, which ſhew it muſt by no means be tolerated in the people. It is called *idolatry* [s]. It is ſaid of the covetous, *that they*, as well as others of an immoral behaviour, *ſhall not enter into the kingdom of God* [t]. And we are aſſured, that when our Lord Jeſus Chriſt comes to judgment, and to paſs ſentence upon the world, the vice againſt which he will ſhew his reſentment in a peculiar manner, is this of covetouſneſs. *I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirſty, and ye gave me no drink. I was a ſtranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; ſick, and in priſon, and ye viſited me not. Then ſhall he anſwer them, ſaying; Verily I ſay unto you, in as much as ye did it not to one of the leaſt of theſe, ye did it not to me. And theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment* [u]. Chriſt's poor are the members of his myſtical body; and therefore he ſays, the things which were not done to them were not done to him. But,

2. Another cauſe of this narrowneſs of ſpirit, which is condemned by the apoſtle, is pride. Men who are ſelf-conceited, who are proud of themſelves and their own pretended

[s] Col. 3. 5.
[t] 1 Cor. 6. 10.
[u] Mat. 25. 42——46.

abilities, are for indulging their own notions and projects, their own ſchemes and methods, after ſuch a manner, that they would ſacrifice the publick to their own private humours. Pride ſo much obtain'd, even in the times of the apoſtles, among the primitive chriſtians, that it cauſed great factions and ſchiſms amongſt them: and in the church of Corinth particularly; *while one ſaith, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos*; the apoſtle juſtly asks them, *Are ye not carnal, and walk as men* [v]*?* They minded *their own things, and not the things of Chriſt:* and therefore the apoſtle thus reproves them; *Is Chriſt divided? was Paul crucified* [w]*?* &c. q. d. "You ſhould not ſet up one name or another "name after ſuch a manner, or be vainly "conceited of yourſelves, or of others, to "whom you ſo ſtrictly adhere, in oppoſition "to the publick intereſt of Chriſt."

3. Another cauſe of this evil is envy. Some perſons are ſo weak and ill-natur'd, that they envy the gifts which God hath given to others; whereas they ſhould rejoice that God hath endowed others with better gifts than themſelves. Moſes *wiſhed that all the Lord's people were prophets* [x]; that they were all abundantly more uſeful and ſerviceable to the common intereſt of religion. What a poor and ſordid ſpirit is it for men to envy others for the reputation they have in the church

[v] 1 Cor. 3. 3, 4.
[w] Chap. 1. 13.
[x] Num. 11. 29.

of

of God; for the endowments of their minds, and the talents they have gain'd; or any advantage whereby they are rendered more ſerviceable than themſelves? This is a vice attended with ſo much diſgrace amongſt men, that there is no man will acknowledge he hath it; no man will confeſs that he is guilty of envy in the proper ſenſe, and in the ſenſe I am now ſpeaking of. But alas! tho it is ſo ſordid and ſo odious, that there is no perſon ſo confident but he would be aſhamed to own it; yet it is a crime too frequently found among them who call themſelves chriſtians. A far different temper of mind prevailed in the apoſtle Paul, who rejoiced when Chriſt was preached. However, they who did it, laboured to diſcredit him, and endeavoured to ſupport their own reputation upon the ruin of his; yet ſtill he *rejoiced if Chriſt were preached* [y], ſo that by their preaching any good was done in the world.

4. Another cauſe of this evil, is peeviſhneſs or ill temper. Some are naturally thus inclined, and have indulged themſelves in an evil habit to that degree, that it is a hard matter to conquer what renders them ſo uneaſy, and indeed intolerable to others. 'Tis certain, habits of this kind muſt proceed from ignorance, pride and ſelf-conceit. And ſome there are ſo froward, that they can never be eaſy with any thing but what gratifies their

[y] Phil. 1. 18.

own

own inconſtant and unaccountable humours. They are ſo moroſe and ſour, ſo full of jealouſies and ſuſpicions, ſo apt to miſinterpret things; that they are not only ready to entertain the moſt unkind opinion of others, but very often will endeavour to hinder the uſeful deſigns and valuable purpoſes of good men, by inſinuating ſuch jealouſies into other peoples minds as they have form'd in their own. Thus did the Jews and the falſe teachers amongſt the chriſtians, inſinuate things to the diſadvantage of the apoſtle Paul, that they might leſſen his authority and credit amongſt the people; as appears by both the epiſtles to the Corinthians, and the epiſtle to the Galatians. There is ſuch a frowardneſs of temper in ſome, that inſtead of putting their hands and ſhoulders to the ſame ſervice and intereſt of religion with their chriſtian brethren, they rather ſet themſelves to oppoſe that which is good. This is by no means to be indulged by any: men ought to look narrowly into their own ſouls, and ſee from whence their ſuſpicions ariſe; if from themſelves, they ought to think it a great unhappineſs, that, by their ill humour, they ſhould obſtruct any thing which may be for the publick good, the intereſt of religion, and the glory of Jeſus Chriſt. When the people propheſied in the camp, *My Lord forbid them* [z], ſays Joſhua to Moſes. And the diſ-

[z] Num. 11. 28.

ciples

ciples would have had those forbidden who performed miracles in the name of Christ; *because*, say they, *they follow not us* [a]: they have not intirely embraced our principles, they seem to be another party of men; care should be taken to obstruct their proceedings; therefore *forbid them*. But both Moses and Christ speak after another manner: *Would to God all the Lord's people were prophets* [b], says Moses. *Forbid them not* [c], says Christ. As they preach some of the same truths, and advance the same common interest of religion with us; therefore they are to be indulged: and not only so, but they are to be cherished, seeing they promote the same good design.

5. Another reason of this narrowness of spirit, blamed by the apostle, is superstition and bigotry. Some persons are so superstitiously concerned about lesser matters of religion, that they do not seem to care much what becomes of things of greater importance. If *mint, anise and cummin be tithed* [d], as was the case of the Pharisees, tho *the weightier matters of the law be neglected*, they are well enough contented. These are little narrow spirits; whose heads are so full of things of the smallest consequence, that they are uncapable of entertaining any thing else. And as all their warmth in religion is spent about those things wherein differences may be easily borne; so they have

[a] Mark 9. 38.
[b] Num. 11. 29.
[c] Mark 9. 39.
[d] Mat. 23. 23.

no

no zeal to ſpare for matters of the higheſt conſequence. Such is their concern about their own ſentiments, and ſome particular practices wherein they differ from other chriſtians; that, to promote theſe things, they will even diſregard religion in general, and abandon the common intereſt and advantage of the church of Chriſt. This is unbecoming the ſpirit of a chriſtian. Were there not great differences among the profeſſors of chriſtianity in the apoſtles times? Yet the apoſtle Paul exhorts them that they ſhould *bear one with another* [e]; and take charitable methods to bring differing parties to unity. And indeed it muſt be charity, if any thing in the world, which muſt unite chriſtians together, and unite them in the ſame ſentiments. Ill treatment is never the way to diveſt men of their prejudices, but to increaſe them.

6. Another cauſe of this great miſchief, that men promote *their own things* ſo much, *and not the things of Jeſus Chriſt*, is lazineſs and puſillanimity. Too many are ſtupid and negligent in thoſe things wherein they ought to be the moſt induſtrious. Some are mighty diligent in their own affairs, can *riſe up early and ſit up late, and eat the bread of ſorrow* [f], to advance the intereſt of their families; but they are ſo unactive and ſtupid when any thing is propoſed to them for the advance-

[e] Col. 3. 13. | [f] Pſal. 127. 2.

ment

ment of the interest of Christ and religion, that they seem to have no heart, they know not how to go about it. To this I join pusillanimity, or timorousness in any thing wherein men think there will be some expence, or other difficulty. These are unwilling to serve the interest of Christ, and the common cause of religion, for fear of trouble and charge: as if we were born for ourselves alone, to seek our own ease and pleasure: as if it became christians patiently to see disorders multiply in the church of God, and not make use of their endeavours to rectify them; or to see others concerned about that good work, and not to lend a helping hand to it. The apostle Paul was concerned at whatever befel the churches of Christ: *Who is weak*, says he, *and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not* [g]? He carried the affairs of the people of God so much upon his heart, that he was continually concerned for them at the throne of grace in his prayers, and continually writing to them to know their affairs and welfare; endeavouring to reclaim them from all their faults, and to instruct and edify them, that they might advance in divine knowledge, and *adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour* [h].

How unbecoming is it for ministers to be careless and negligent in the affairs of God's house, when its edification is their special

[g] 2 Cor. 11. 29. [h] Tit. 2. 10.

employ-

employment; and it ſhould be their chief concern, by all imaginable endeavours, to ſupport the common intereſt of religion? They, in eſpecial manner, are devoted to the ſervice of Chriſt; therefore ſhould *mind the things of Chriſt*, and *not their own*. And the people too, as they have profeſſed themſelves to be chriſtians, and devoted themſelves to Chriſt, they ought likewiſe to be active and zealous in his ſervice. How many difficulties do ſome men form to themſelves? Some ſay, *it is not yet time* to promote ſuch and ſuch a good work. But, *Is it time for you to abide in your cieled houſes*, ſays the prophet, *and this houſe lie waſte*[i]? So in the words of my text I may ask you; *Is it time for you to ſeek your own things, while the things of Chriſt are neglected?* The ſluggard, and timorous perſon, when he is deſired to be concerned in any good thing, will ſay with him in the Proverbs, *There is a lion in the way; I ſhall be ſlain in the ſtreets*[k]: I ſhall be expoſed, ſhall blemiſh my reputation, ſhall draw upon myſelf ſome difficulty or other. This is very unbecoming chriſtians. The apoſtle Paul was of another ſpirit; he was ſo far from indulging his own eaſe, that he was willing even to be ſacrificed for the publick intereſt: *Yea*, ſays he, *if I be offered upon the ſacrifice and ſervice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all*[l].

[i] Hag. 1. 4.
[k] Prov. 22. 13.
[l] Phil. 2. 17.

The

The apostle speaks these words as one who heartily believed the promises made to such as persevere in Christ's faithful service; and fortified himself against the views of suffering, with the firm expectation of their fulfilment. 'Tis the want of this which makes our resolutions fail: and 'tis certain there is a disbelief of Christ's promises attending all the other causes of mens *seeking their own things*, and *neglecting the things of Jesus Christ*. I might therefore insist upon this particularly under a distinct head: but having enlarged so much already, I forbear; and proceed,

III. To consider the reasons why we should *seek the things of Christ* rather than *our own*; and the unreasonableness of the contrary procedure.

1. It is evident that we ought *not to seek our own things, but the things of Christ preferable to them*; if we will grant that the things which are of themselves most excellent and of the highest consequence, ought to be preferred to those which are less excellent and of less importance. None will deny this proposition: and surely it ought to be no doubt with a christian, that *the things of Christ*, the honour of his name, the interest of religion, and the happiness of his church, are preferable to a man's private interest, and the interest of his family; that divine things are preferable to human things, our spiritual

to

to our worldly advantage. Is it not reaſonable that we ſhould have regard to the honour of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is worthy of infinite glory and dignity, when it is ſo great a part of the buſineſs of the church above, as well as below, to aſcribe glory and praiſe to his name, *who hath redeemed us by his blood* [m] ? Is not the intereſt of Chriſt the greateſt and beſt end of all others ? that which God prefers above all others ? Should not this, therefore, be promoted and advanced by every one of us ? Is not the promotion of religion in the world of the greateſt importance, ſeeing the intereſt of ſo many ſouls is concerned therein ? And ſhould not we be lovers of ſouls, ſeeing God hath declared himſelf ſo to be ? If the apoſtle could *wiſh himſelf anathematized* for the ſalvation of ſouls [n], ſurely we ought to have a tender regard to the ſouls of men ; and ſhould, with the greateſt readineſs and application, ſeek the common intereſt of religion, that we might *ſave our ownſelves, and others alſo* [o]. Is it not the moſt noble and rational employment to mind the things of religion, thoſe truths which are the higheſt improvement of our underſtandings when we know them, and the moſt proper to correct our evil habits ; which render us conformable to the divine image, and adorn us with godlike graces and virtues ?

[m] Rev. 5. 9——14.
[n] Rom. 9. 3.
[o] 1 Tim. 4. 16.

Should

Should not theſe divine things, on our own account, be carefully minded? And if we ſhould obſerve them for the intereſt of our own ſouls, then certainly for the ſouls of others too. Is it not reaſonable that we ſhould poſtpone the things of this world to thoſe of another; and account the things of time, *what we ſhall eat, and what we ſhall drink, and what we ſhall put on* [p], leſs than the things of eternity; how our ſouls ſhall be fed with knowledge and underſtanding, and with the bread and water of life? Are ourſelves and our families of ſuch conſequence, that, in providing for their temporal intereſt, which God hath allowed us, we ſhould totally neglect the temporal and ſpiritual welfare and proſperity of ſo many others to whom we are allied in the bonds of chriſtianity? Is it not worth our while to ſacrifice our own honour and intereſt to the honour and intereſt of Jeſus Chriſt, eſpecially when we ſhall find it again with advantage in the other world? Is it ſo much to be regarded, whether we have abundance of eaſe and ſenſual pleaſure, or whether the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be advanced, and the intereſt of many ſouls be provided for? Is there not a divine pleaſure in conſulting the publick intereſt and advantage, when we conſider how reaſonable it is on all accounts? Can we be eaſy, if, by the grace of God, we

[p] Mat. 6. 31.

have been helped to correct the diſorders of our own minds? Can we be eaſy when we find diſorders in communities, which are formed for the honour of Chriſt and the good of ſouls, and not lay to heart theſe diſorders, and endeavour to rectify them, if poſſible? Thus you ſee that nothing is more reaſonable than that we ſhould poſtpone our own private affairs to the publick intereſt of religion. And,

2. As the thing is reaſonable in itſelf, ſo there is an obligation upon us in point of gratitude. We are ungrateful if we do not *ſeek the things of Jeſus Chriſt in preference to our own.* Our Lord Jeſus *pleaſed not himſelf*, ſought not his own things, but ſought our happineſs; as the apoſtle obſerves, *Even Chriſt pleaſed not himſelf* [q]. He ſought our pleaſure and advantage, how we might be freed from everlaſting miſery, and advanced to everlaſting glory. *He became poor, that we, thro' his poverty, might be made rich* [r]. He ſtripped himſelf of his honour, and veiled the glory of his divinity, by aſſuming our nature, and *taking upon him the form of a ſervant* [s], that he might conſult our intereſt and promote our happineſs, both in time and to eternity. And ſhould not this ſtupendous grace ſtir up in our minds a grateful diſpoſition to make him what returns we are capable of? Our Lord Jeſus does not require

[q] Rom. 15. 3.
[r] 2 Cor. 8. 9.
[s] Phil. 2. 7.

us

us to deny ourselves to such a degree as he was voluntarily pleased to deny himself; but it is altogether reasonable we should deny ourselves in some things for his interest, especially since our own truest and greatest advantage is so intimately united with it. And surely gratitude should oblige us: for our blessed Redeemer, when there was no necessity upon him to be concerned for us, tho he was invested with infinite dignity and majesty, assumed our nature, and was pleased to expose himself to the contumelious and painful death of the cross for our sakes. *He went about doing good* to others [s], but even forgot himself. When he was weary, and hungry and thirsty by the well of Samaria, no sooner was he denied a draught of water when he asked it of the woman there, but he forgot his own thirst, because he was desirous of the salvation of her soul; and spake to her of *the water of life* [t]. His hearty and unwearied concern for the welfare of others, appears by the frequency and manner of his instructing his disciples, and weeping over their folly and unbelief. Indeed herein he imitated the goodness of God the Father, *who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all* [u]. And shall we spare any thing that we can give to him? Certainly gratitude requires us, if God hath given us endowments of mind, knowledge

[s] Acts 10. 38.
[t] John 4. 10.
[u] Rom. 8. 32.

and learning, that we ſhould employ that knowledge, that learning, thoſe abilities, of whatſoever kind, for his intereſt. If he hath given us eſtates and reputation in the world; thoſe eſtates, at leaſt a part of them, ſhould be laid out for his ſervice and glory; and that reputation ſhould be employed to credit religion, and to advance the name of Chriſt: and when we have done all, we ſhall be but *unprofitable ſervants* [v]; we cannot compenſate, by what we can do, what our Lord Jeſus hath done for us. He hath ſought to advance our pleaſure and happineſs, and hath taken effectual care to make our everlaſting welfare ſecure: nay, he hath given us the promiſes of this life, ſo far as they are conſiſtent with his honour and our ſpiritual good. He hath told us, if we *ſeek firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs, all other things ſhall be added to us* [w]. And the apoſtle ſays, *Godlineſs hath the promiſe of this life and of that which is to come* [x]. Does not gratitude oblige us to make returns? Have we a title to a crown of everlaſting glory; is there durable riches and righteouſneſs laid up for us; did Chriſt ſeek our intereſt ſo much, and provide for it ſo well; and ſhall we be careleſs and inſenſible about his? Shall we do nothing for him while we are in this world? What ſhame and confuſion would this throw us into, if we looked well into our own minds,

[v] Luke 17. 10.
[w] Mat. 6. 33.
[x] 1 Tim. 4. 8.

and

and examined what obligations of gratitude we are under, and how little we have answered them?

3. Not only are we obliged by gratitude, if we would act by that generous principle; but we are obliged by solemn covenant to our Lord Jesus Christ. He hath given himself for us and to us on his part; and we have devoted ourselves to him and his service on our part, if we are christians indeed: *We are not our own, but are bought with a price; and therefore ought to glorify God with our bodies and spirits, which are his* [y]. Shall we seek *our own things*, to the prejudice of Christ and his honour, when we ourselves *are not our own?* We have given up ourselves to him; we are consecrated to his service: and it is sacrilege for us to go about to rob him of any thing that is his; to rob him of his honour, and the service that is due to him.

Ministers are under an especial obligation, as being peculiarly devoted to the service of God. Shall any of us be so sordid and base, and of so narrow and dishonourable principles, as to forget the interest of our Lord Jesus Christ, his honour, and his people? Shall we postpone his honour and interest to our own temporal advantage; and be seeking ourselves when we should be doing good to others, and to the interest of Christ to

[y] 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20.

which we are devoted, and in which we are engaged to ſpend ourſelves? On the contrary, whatſoever treatment we meet with, we ſhould generouſly reſolve, with the bleſſed apoſtle, that we will *labour more abundantly*: that we will never deſiſt from our work, that we will never be terrified from doing that which is our duty, whatſoever be the conſequence; *tho the more abundantly we love, the leſs we are beloved* [z]: conſidering that as it is our trueſt intereſt while we are here, ſo it is of the greateſt importance to us to act in this manner, *that we may be able to give up our accounts with joy* hereafter [a].

And this is not only the duty and intereſt of miniſters, but of the people too: thoſe who are truly chriſtians, have devoted themſelves to the honour and intereſt of Chriſt. *You are not your own* [b]: if you have any gifts or talents, any abilities of mind which may be employed for the honour of religion; do you think that theſe muſt be expended only upon your families, and for obtaining a great eſtabliſhment for them in the world; and that you are to project nothing, to deſign nothing, to ſpend no thoughts, no endeavours for the promotion of religion, and the honour of Chriſt in it? Do you think your eſtates are given you for yourſelves only, or for your children? God requires you ſhould pay him homage: it is all his; and you may

[z] 2 Cor. 12. 15.
[a] Heb. 13. 17.
[b] 1 Cor. 6. 19.

ſay,

say, when you bring him the largest offerings, *Of thy own, O Lord, we offer unto thee* [c]. Have you any thing but what is lent you? You are stewards, and God hath intrusted you with talents: he allows you a considerable part for your own use, and that of your families; and will you refuse to pay him the homage that he has reserved for himself? He puts it into your hands, that you may have the satisfaction of contributing something towards the honour of his name; and that you may have the god-like pleasure of relieving many in affliction and distress. And will you refuse yourselves this pleasure and satisfaction, this opportunity of pleasing God here, and of enhancing your reward in heaven? Consider how strong the obligations are upon you. Let us all seriously observe what engagements we are under. As we are entered into covenant with God, *we are not our own but his*; and must *therefore glorify him in our bodies and spirits, which are his* [d].

But in the last place, to add no more: Your own interest is concerned in this matter. This may seem a paradox; a man least *seeks his own things* in the best sense, when he seems to seek them most. When he neglects the interest of Christ, he little seeks his own interest: and when he looks after the interest of Christ, he most seeks his own. It is easy to make this out to you. For, what is our own

[c] 1 Chron. 29. 14. | [d] 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20.

intereſt? Why, how we may have a conſcience eaſy in this world, and how we may be happy for ever; how we may be formed after the image of God, and fitted for communion with him here and to all eternity. Is not the ſalvation of our ſouls a matter of the higheſt conſequence; and is not the advancing our happineſs and joy in heaven, a matter of greateſt importance? Well then, if we abandon our *own things* after ſuch a manner as to prefer to them *the things of Chriſt*; if we make religion our principal buſineſs, to promote it not only in our own ſouls, but as much as we can in the world; we may ſafely leave our own things to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. If we employ ſuch a part of our time and talents for his ſervice as becomes us, we ſhall loſe nothing of our temporal intereſt thereby; but, on the other hand, advance it. God ſecured the poſſeſſions of the Iſraelites, when their males came up to Jeruſalem to worſhip three times a-year; and promiſed them that the heathen *ſhould not* ſo much as *deſire their land* at thoſe times [e]. If you will ſeek his intereſt and honour, your own affairs will not run back; your own intereſt will not be unprovided for. It is much better to have our affairs under the ſpecial and peculiar care and protection of God's providence; much better for us to intail a bleſſing upon our families, by doing what is ſuitable to the divine requirements, than if

[e] Exod. 34. 24.

we

we could leave them the greatest sums. We shall *lay up treasures in heaven*, if we employ our temporal riches to the honour of God and the interest of religion. We shall hereby secure our riches; and tho they are transitory things, tho they *take to themselves wings and fly away* in this world, and if they abide with us, we must leave them in a little time; yet this is the sure way to turn earthly treasures into heavenly. And if we secure our estates in heaven, we shall be sure to find them there, with vast improvements, in the good consequences of such a conduct and management; *we shall be rewarded at the resurrection of the just* [f]. Is not peace of conscience a great blessing; and especially when we come to die? But what a sad reflection will it be then, if we find we have been only *seeking our own things*, and to build up a family, and have been thoughtless of the interest of Jesus Christ? Will this be a comfortable reflection, I say, in our conscience when we come to die?

Oh how happy shall we be, who are ministers, if we can then speak as the apostle Paul did: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto them also that love his appearing* [g]. What mighty comfort will it give us

[f] Luke 14. 14. [g] 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.

to

to reflect upon ourſelves, and ſay, " We have " been guilty of no great hurt in the church ?" whereas there wants ſomething of a poſitive nature to comfort a man then. What good have we done ? what diſorders have we attempted to rectify ? what credit have we brought to religion by our example ? what poor have we relieved ? what publick ſpirit and temper have we ſhewn for the honour of Chriſt, and the advancement of his intereſt ? Whether miniſters or people, we ſhould conſider this ; whether our concern has been chiefly for our religion, or for the ſucceſs of our temporal affairs, and the advancement of our families ; for our ſpiritual intereſt here, and our eternal intereſt hereafter, or for the things of this world.

If we beſtow a part of our eſtates for the ſervice of God, and give him that which he requires of us, he ſays, *Prove me now if I will not pour you out a bleſſing, that there ſhall not be room enough to receive it* [h]. And men may very ſafely truſt in the Almighty ; for *all the promiſes of God are faithful and true.* But who is there that hath piety enough to truſt God ? *Honour the Lord with thy ſubſtance,* ſays the wiſe man, *and with the firſt-fruits of thine increaſe : ſo ſhall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy preſſes ſhall burſt out with new wine* [i]. But who will believe this ? Tho we were continually meeting with troubles

[h] Mal. 3. 10. | [i] Prov. 3. 9, 10.

and

and afflictions, poverty, sorrow and contempt in this world; yet if we did but mind the interest of Christ and religion, our own everlasting advantage would be hereby consulted by us; and our Lord Jesus Christ will know such at his coming, and he will acknowledge them when he appears. *Come, ye blessed of my Father. I was an hungred, and ye fed me* [k], &c. —— "You sought *the* "*things of Christ*, my affairs, my concerns; "you relieved the members of my mystical "body, advanced the interest of my church "and kingdom. *Come, ye blessed of my* "*Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for* "*you. Well done, good and faithful ser-* "*vants; enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*" *Well done, good and faithful servants!* How happy to be thus commended and approved by our Lord Jesus Christ at his appearing! How happy to be found without shame, and with confidence before him at his coming! It is true, no good thing which we can do by the grace of God, can be meritorious in us; we must disclaim all things of this kind: for *we are unprofitable servants* [l], and never do more than we ought to do; nay, indeed, never do so much. However, to encourage our obedience, there is such a reward proposed to us.

Shall not these considerations then engage us all to divest ourselves of all narrow and

[k] Mat. 25. [l] Luke 17. 10.

slavish

ſlaviſh principles? Shall not what hath been ſaid inſpire us with noble and generous diſpoſitions, anſwerable to the obligations our holy religion lays upon us? Shall not reaſon, gratitude, and our own ſolemn promiſes and covenants, wherein we are engaged to God, oblige us to deny ourſelves, *not to ſeek our own things, but the profit of others*, and the honour of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt? Let us, according to theſe principles, and the glorious ends we have in view, behave ourſelves as becomes us.

And upon this occaſion of our aſſembling together, let me recommend to you, my brethren, and fellow-labourers in the goſpel of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that you ſhew an eminent example on this account. It behoves us certainly, who are conſecrated to the ſervice of God, to be examples to thoſe who are under our care and charge: it behoves us, on all occaſions, to ſhew this generoſity of mind, and to imitate the pattern of our Lord and his apoſtles, and the primitive chriſtians; that we bring no diſgrace upon our function. It would be a ſad thing, if it ſhould be juſtly complained of us, as in our text, *All ſeek their own things, not the things which are Jeſus Chriſt's.* Far be it from us: I believe better things concerning you; and that you have a greater regard to the intereſt of our Lord Jeſus Cnriſt, than to your own private advantage. Let us ſhew it on all occaſions:

and let us be examples of humility, peace and concord; examples of moderation and charity. Let us be first in every good work, and do what we can to advance the interest of God and religion.

And you, my brethren, who are not employed so strictly and immediately in the service of God, who are not devoted to his work in the same manner those are who minister in his name; do you consider that christians are called in scripture *a kingdom of priests* [m]: they are all consecrated to God, and may all do considerable service to his interest. You may all teach by your conversations, by your advice and counsels, by your estates, and by all the advantages which God hath given you. You are to promote the common interest of religion, and to shew yourselves like-minded to Christ Jesus. *Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus* [n]; as the apostle exhorts in this chapter wherein is our text. And let me conclude this discourse with another passage of his in the same epistle: *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure; whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things: those things which you have both learned, and received, and heard,*

[m] Rev. 5. 10. | [n] Phil. 2. 5.

and

and ſeen in me, do; and the God of peace ſhall be with you °. Let us all, both miniſters and people, be found doing after the ſame manner; and then God will be with us.

° Phil. 4. 8, 9.

SER-

SERMON II.

Preach'd before the

SOCIETIES for reformation of manners, at *Salter's-Hall*, June 26, 1710.

PROV. xiv. 34.

Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation : but ſin is a reproach to any people.

AS the practice of religion and virtue is the intereſt of every man, conſidered in his private capacity ; ſo it tends to the happineſs of communities, and recommends itſelf to human ſociety by the great advantages it brings to thoſe who entertain and cultivate it : whereas vice and profaneneſs not only bring miſery on particular perſons ; but ſooner or later ſubvert and ruin thoſe nations and kingdoms wherein they are countenanced and indulged.

This is what the wiſeſt of men, and one of the greateſt of princes, teaches us in the words of our text : which contains a fundamental

mental maxim of ſtate, worthy the regard of the beſt politicians, and indeed of all who wiſh well to mankind; ſince it informs us what it is that moſt certainly raiſes, and what moſt effectually degrades and deſtroys any nation or people in the world. *Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation*, &c.

Tho *righteouſneſs*, in the holy ſcripture, ſometimes ſignifies liberality and charity; and therefore the pſalmiſt, in giving the character of a charitable man, ſays, *He hath diſperſed abroad, and given to the poor; his righteouſneſs endureth for ever* [p]: yet in this place it ſeems neceſſary to take it either ſtrictly for *juſtice and equity*, or for *virtue and holineſs* in general.

If it be taken for *juſtice*, the obſervation of Solomon is very good, that the regular adminiſtration of juſtice in magiſtrates, and juſt and honeſt dealings among the people, are a great honour and ſupport to any community: and that injuſtice and corruption, fraud and violence, are very reproachful and ſcandalous, and tend to the diſcredit of any government where they obtain, and at length prove deſtructive of human ſociety.

What gives ſome countenance to this interpretation, is, that in the other member of this ſentence, a word is uſed in the Hebrew, which often ſignifies *mercy* [q], and is frequently coupled with *juſtice*, both of them com-

[p] Pſal. 112. 9. | [q] חסד.

prizing

prizing all the duties of the ſecond table of the law. *What doth the Lord require of thee,* ſays the prophet Micah, *but to do juſtly, and to love mercy* [r]*?* &c. And the pſalmiſt, deſcribing the proſperous ſtate of the Jews, and perhaps ultimately that of the kingdom of the Meſſiah, ſays, *Mercy and truth are met together; righteouſneſs and peace have kiſſed each other* [f]. And Solomon himſelf connects theſe in this book of Proverbs, when he ſays, *He that follows after righteouſneſs and mercy, finds life, righteouſneſs and honour* [s].

Now according to this account, the wiſe man may be underſtood to recommend mercy as well as juſtice in the text; ſince theſe, when well tempered, and ſeaſonably diſpenſed, are the chief bonds and ligaments of ſociety, and the very baſis and ſtrength of government: therefore he elſewhere ſays, *Mercy and truth preſerve the king; and his throne is upholden by mercy* [t].

But then inſtead of *ſin is a reproach to any people*, we muſt read, mercy is a *reconciliation* to the people, or an *expiation* for the people: which the original will very well bear, ſince the word is elſewhere uſed in that ſenſe [u].

Not that we are to ſuppoſe that the exerciſe of mercy, clemency and charity on juſt occaſions, can expiate the guilt either of

[r] Mic. 6. 8.
[f] Pſal. 85. 10.
[s] Prov. 21. 21.
[t] Prov. 20. 28.
[u] Exod. 29. 14. Lev. 4. 3.

magiſtrates or private perſons, ſo as to juſtify them before God. But this is a figurative term, deſign'd to expreſs either the good effects of mercy in a government, in appeaſing the rage of popular tumults, and reconciling different parties, ſo as to make them conſpire to promote the good of the publick; and is as much as to ſay, *Mercy appeaſes and reconciles the people.* Or elſe it may denote how very acceptable charity and mercy are to God, in ſo much that he prefers them to ſacrifice: and ſo the words may be rendered, *Mercy is* as *a ſin-offering for the people.* For thus a ſort of atonement may be ſaid to be made for national guilt, ſo as to prevent a national puniſhment. To this purpoſe the prophet Daniel adviſes the king of Babylon to reform his government: *Break off thy ſins by righteouſneſs, and thy iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthning of thy tranquillity* [v]: which the Septuagint renders, *Pay a ranſom for thy ſins, by ſhewing mercy* [w], &c. And Solomon ſays, *By mercy and truth iniquity is purged* [x]. And thus Phineas is ſaid, by an act of juſtice, to have *made an atonement for the children of Iſrael* [y].

Another way of rendering the words is thus; *But mercy is ſin to any people:* that is, 'tis an occaſion of ſin to a nation; and ſo

[v] Dan. 4. 27.
[w] τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου ἐν ἐλεημοσύναις λύτρωσαι, &c.
[x] Prov. 16. 6.
[y] Num. 25. 13.

muſt

muſt be underſtood of that undue and unſeaſonable exerciſe of mercy and lenity which proves an obſtruction to juſtice; or is ſuch a relaxation of it as is inconſiſtent with the publick good, in that it gives encouragement to vice. For the wiſe man tells us, *Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not ſpeedily executed, therefore the heart of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil* [z].

But if *righteouſneſs*, in the text, may be taken in a larger ſenſe, *viz.* for religion and virtue in general, as it commonly is in the ſacred writings; then the latter part of the verſe muſt be underſtood according to our tranſlation, and ſets vice in a juſt oppoſition to virtue: *But ſin is a reproach*, &c. This ſenſe is choſen by divers interpreters, and the original will very well allow it: for the ſame word which is here tranſlated *reproach*, is uſed concerning inceſtuous marriage, *Lev.* 20. 17. and rendered in our verſion *a wicked thing* [a]; but by others a reproachful or ſhameful thing.

In this ſenſe I chuſe to take the words, becauſe it ſeems to me the moſt natural; tho the other interpretations are not to be contemned, and might be well accommodated to the occaſion of this diſcourſe.

When the wiſe man ſays, *Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation*, he may be fairly underſtood to mean that it advances its dignity and

[z] Eccleſ. 8. 11.

[a] חסד הוא *opprobrium hoc.*

proſperity; as he elſewhere ſays of wiſdom, by which he generally means religion and virtue: *Exalt her, and ſhe ſhall promote thee; ſhe ſhall bring thee to honour, when thou doſt embrace her* [b].

Some render it, *Righteouſneſs protects a nation*; and the word in the text is uſed to a like purpoſe in the pſalms: *He delivereth me from my enemies; yea, thou lifteſt me up above thoſe that riſe up againſt me* [c]: i. e. thou defendeſt me, and giveſt me victory over them. According to this, it ſignifies that righteouſneſs is a defence to a nation, and renders it ſucceſsful againſt its enemies; which is agreeable to that paſſage in the book of Job: *When men are caſt down, then thou ſhalt ſay, There is lifting up.——He ſhall deliver the iſland of the innocent; and it is delivered by the pureneſs of thy hands* [d].

And, on the contrary, *ſin is a reproach to any people*; or, as the Septuagint and Syriac verſions will have it, ſin *diminiſhes or leſſens* a people: which diminution may extend to their honour, wealth and power.

The ſum of the matter is, that the practice of virtue and religion raiſes a nation to great proſperity at home, and gives it great credit and reputation abroad; cauſes it to be reſpected by its neighbours and allies, and renders it formidable to its enemies: whereas vice and profaneneſs reduce a people to a

[b] Prov. 4. 8.
[c] Pſal. 18. 48.
[d] Job 22. 29, 30.

weak

weak and miſerable condition; ſo that they become mean and inconſiderable in the account of foreigners, and prove the ſcorn and contempt of their enemies.

That *righteouſneſs* thus *exalts*, and *ſin* thus *depreſſes a nation*; I ſhall endeavour more particularly to make appear,

I. From the reaſon of the thing itſelf, in the ordinary courſe of nature.
II. From the juſtice of the divine providence, in the government of the world.
III. From the declarations of the word of God.
IV. From the obſervation and experience of mankind in the various ages of the world.

I. From the reaſon of the thing itſelf, in the ordinary courſe of nature.

And here we are to conſider, on the one hand, what it is which can render a nation truly great and happy; and, on the other, how neceſſary religion and virtue are to its welfare; and how oppoſite vice and irreligion are to its felicity.

Every one will acknowledge that wiſdom and prudence are requiſite to the well-being of a nation; and that theſe qualifications are ſo much the more neceſſary, in that they are of the laſt importance to thoſe who are intruſted with the adminiſtration of publick affairs. Add to this, that the improvement

of knowledge, and the encouragement of all uſeful arts and ſciences, conduce much to the proſperity of any people. This is often inculcated by the wiſe man, who repreſents wiſdom, ſaying; *I wiſdom dwell with prudence, and find out the knowledge of witty inventions* [e]. *Counſel is mine, and ſound wiſdom: I am underſtanding; I have ſtrength. By me kings reign, and princes decree juſtice. By me princes rule, and nobles; even all the judges of the earth* [f]. And again: *Wiſdom is a defence, and money is a defence; but the excellency of knowledge is, that wiſdom gives life to them that have it* [g]. This makes men *underſtand righteouſneſs, and judgment and equity; yea, every good path* [h]. This, he ſays, *is better than ſtrength* [i]. *Wiſdom ſtrengthens the wiſe more than ten mighty men which are in the city* [k].

Now as the practice of virtue and religion is the greateſt inſtance of true wiſdom and knowledge, both in magiſtrates and people; ſo it directly tends to improve and cultivate the minds of men, by giving them juſt notions of good and evil, of right and wrong, of honour and ſhame; and prompts them to aſpire after intellectual accompliſhments, as amiable in their own nature, and of the utmoſt conſequence to make them ſafe and happy in ſociety, and ſerviceable to the pub-

[e] Prov. 8. 12.
[f] Ver. 14, 15, 16.
[g] Eccl. 7. 12.
[h] Prov. 2. 9.
[i] Eccl. 9. 16.
[k] Eccl. 7. 19.

lick,

lick. This makes them disdain to debase their noblest faculties, and abuse their best talents in the eager pursuit of sensual pleasures, and in the vile servitude of sin. This makes them frugal of their time, and ready to embrace all opportunities, and other advantages, for the improvement of their minds; not only for the sake of those refin'd pleasures themselves may expect to reap from such generous exercises, but also that they may hereby qualify themselves for the service of the community in which they live.

Whereas vice weakens and enervates the faculties of the soul, spreads a veil on the understanding, fills the heads of men with vain and foolish notions, and unreasonable prejudices; which appear in many sad instances in the conduct of their lives, as well to their own damage as that of the publick. This wastes their time, renders them slothful and negligent, and so uncapable of that vigorous pursuit of wisdom and knowledge, that application and diligence, which the wise man expresses, by *searching for it as for silver, and digging for it as for hid treasure* [1]. And while they are continually projecting what methods are to be taken for the gratification of their corrupt appetites, and *making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*; they often neglect what is necessary to accomplish them for doing their country any

[1] Prov. 2. 4.

eminent ſervice. So that 'tis plain that virtue tends to advance a nation in wiſdom and knowledge, in arts and learning; and vice tends to introduce ignorance and barbarity, to make a people dull and inſipid, and magiſtrates weak and incompetent to diſcharge the great truſt repoſed in them for the common welfare.

2. As the improvement of mens minds in wiſdom and knowledge tends to the happineſs of a community; ſo a healthful and vigorous conſtitution of body is no inconſiderable advantage to the inhabitants of any nation. For this makes men capable of undergoing the neceſſary labours of human life, whether in a publick or private ſtation; whether in an induſtrious reſearch of knowledge and wiſdom, or in the exerciſe and improvement of theſe for the publick good. This is not only a great advantage to thoſe who are employed in manuring the ground, and in manufacturing the produce of it; but in the management of domeſtick trade and foreign commerce. This tends to make men follow their employments vigorouſly in time of peace, and fits them for the ſometimes neceſſary toils and fatigues of war.

I am not now conſidering the pleaſure of health, and the advantages of a vigorous conſtitution to the particular perſons who enjoy it; but how very uſeful 'tis to the civil ſociety, that the members of it ſhould be ſtrong and healthful.

Now

Now 'tis virtue which procures this part of happineſs, in the natural courſe of things. None can be ignorant how much ſobriety and temperance tend to preſerve and promote our health; and how valuable a bleſſing this is to any nation who poſſeſs it in an eminent degree, not only on their own account, but on the account of their poſterity, to whom it is ordinarily derived. Whereas luxury, intemperance, and leudneſs, ſoon waſte the moſt vigorous conſtitution, and have a long train of diſeaſes attending them: and the diſtempers, contracted by the vices of parents, frequently deſcend to their children, and tranſmit their bad effects to more than one generation.

And as there is a ſtrict communication between the body and the ſoul, the infirmities of the one ſtrangely affect the other; and a race of men, who have ſacrificed their health and ſtrength to their vices, are commonly found to have weak and timorous minds; and their ſenſuality and ſloth often render them not only unactive and unwilling to attempt, but uncapable to execute any great and noble deſign with reſolution and courage, induſtry and application. So that ſuch men frequently prove rather a burden than a ſupport to ſociety; and ſometimes appear more fit for hoſpitals than for the ſervice of their country, either in the court, the city, or the camp.

And

And if the vices of mens ſouls are propagated, as well as the diſeaſes of their bodies, by the criminal indulgence or connivance of the civil magiſtrate; how ſtrangely muſt the contagion be ſuppoſed to ſpread, and the miſchief multiply itſelf in the ſucceſſion of two or three generations! How weak and languid would ſuch a nation become, and how liable to the inſults of the next aggreſſor!

3. Plenty and riches in like manner are juſtly accounted in the number of publick bleſſings. Theſe are certainly a great defence to a nation: theſe are the happy fruits of peace, which both alleviate and reward the care and toil of human life; and render a nation capable of ſuſtaining the extraordinary expences of war, when that becomes neceſſary for its defence. Theſe, wiſely improved, encourage art and induſtry, promote trade and commerce, and give a nation weight and reputation in foreign countries. Theſe furniſh us with means of relieving the poor at home, by liberal contributions and charitable endowments; and of ſuccouring the diſtreſſed abroad, by a generous beneficence, not to be confined by any other bounds than thoſe of the world.

But theſe are very much owing to the practice of virtue; ſince 'tis this which makes men prudent in the management of their affairs, induſtrious in the improvement of uſeful arts and commerce, frugal in their expences,

pences, provident for their families, and generous in their diſtributions for the common good: all which tend to gain men credit and eſteem in the world, enlarge their intereſt and power, and thereby give freſh opportunities of enlarging their eſtates.

Religion and virtue teach men how to uſe the world ſo as not to abuſe it; and oblige them to manage their affairs with ſuch juſtice and honeſty as procures them reputation and applauſe, friendſhip and credit, and often furniſhes them with means of riſing in the world, and acquiring wealth: while the men of artifice and fraud, who give themſelves liberty to practiſe the hidden things of diſhoneſty, are frequently detected and diſgraced, ſuſpected and avoided; and at length inherit ſhame and poverty, as the reward of their unrighteous deeds.

In like manner, the voluptuous man waſtes his ſubſtance in riotous living, and is diſſolved in luxury and eaſe, inſtead of uſing induſtry and diligence for the preſervation and increaſe of his ſubſtance. His mind is ſo diſſipated or ſtupified by the pleaſures of ſenſe, that he becomes negligent and careleſs of his own domeſtick affairs, as well as of the welfare and proſperity of his country.

Sometimes indeed even vicious men appear generous and liberal; but then their beneficence is often miſapplied, and rarely managed with diſcretion. And the far greateſt part of them ſacrifice ſo much to their vices,

vices, that they deprive both their own families and the publick of the benefits which might otherwiſe be expected from them.

4. Again: Honour and reputation are as neceſſary to the good of a community, as to that of the individuals which compoſe it. This makes a nation conſiderable to its friends and allies, and conſequently terrible to its enemies.

Now 'tis plain, ſince virtue advances a people in wiſdom and knowledge, gives health and vigor both to their bodies and minds, and improves their ſubſtance; it muſt, in conſequence of theſe, give them honour and reputation in the world. It cannot but raiſe their credit in foreign countries, which will court their alliance and friendſhip, in proportion to their wiſdom and opulency, grandeur and ſtrength. While on the other hand, the vices which render a people lazy and negligent, rude and ignorant, ſoft and effeminate, weak and cowardly, poor and indigent, will make them contemptible to neighbouring ſtates, and a deriſion to their enemies; ſo that their friendſhip and their enmity will be equally deſpiſed.

5. The ſecurity of all thoſe bleſſings, which have been mentioned before, is of the higheſt conſequence to a nation's happineſs. For if mens liberty and property are precarious and ſubject to the capricious humour of a tyrant, and his ſlaviſh flatterers; how

can

can any of the comforts of life be truly reliſhed? How little encouragement has a man to increaſe his knowledge, who is likely by this only to increaſe his ſorrow; while his abilities are either in a great meaſure uſeleſs to the publick, or render him ſuſpected, and expoſe him to the utmoſt hazard, unleſs he can allow himſelf to proſtitute them, to ſerve the deſigns of arbitrary power? What taſte of health and ſtrength can a generous man be ſuppoſed to have when his country is inſlaved, and himſelf involved in the common calamity, and deprived of liberty, which he counts preferable to life itſelf? Or what fruit of his induſtry and care can he promiſe himſelf, whoſe eſtate and life lie at the mercy of cruel and unreaſonable men; or whoſe country is weak, defenſeleſs, and an eaſy prey to foreign invaders? So that the ſecurity of our liberty is of the laſt importance to the welfare and proſperity of a nation.

'Tis liberty which inſpires men with generous deſigns and reſolutions for the common benefit, and makes them diligent in the execution of them. This makes them aſſiduous, and provident in the management both of their own affairs and thoſe of the publick; having a juſt expectation of receiving the reward of their labours, of enjoying the fruit of them themſelves, and of tranſmitting a due ſhare of it ſafely to their poſterity. This teaches princes and magiſtrates

giſtrates to rule with juſtice and clemency, as the common parents of their country, and ſubjects to obey and ſupport their government with good-will and alacrity; and to oppoſe invaders with courage and bravery.

Now religion and virtue tend to ſecure to a people their juſt liberty. Theſe inſpire men with true and reaſonable notions of the rights of mankind, and the good deſign of government; and give them becoming ſentiments of the duties of every relation in which men can ſtand one toward another; and inſtruct them how to behave themſelves both to their governors and their fellow-ſubjects. Theſe teach them to value liberty, not only for their own ſake, but from a tender regard to their country and poſterity; and conſequently to do all that becomes them in the defence of it. Their knowledge, their honour, their courage and vigour, their fidelity and charity to men, their piety and gratitude to God, all conſpire to kindle in their breaſts a noble zeal for the common rights of mankind; and enlarges their ſouls to ſeek the happineſs and good of all men as much as lies in their power.

But vice is deſtructive of the liberty of men, in that it renders them ſupine and negligent of their common rights, eſpecially when thoſe, who deſign to violate them, amuſe and flatter them, by indulging them in a licentious courſe of life; ſo that what the prophet

prophet ſays of wine, *that it takes away the heart* [m], may juſtly be ſaid of vice in general. It takes away the true ſenſe of honour and liberty, and makes men forget their own intereſt: it leſſens their affection to the proper objects of it; and ſometimes alienates their minds from their country and their poſterity. It reduces them to neceſſitous circumſtances, and then tempts them to uſe mean and ſordid methods for their preferment, that they may the better ſupport their extravagant expences; and ſo they ſacrifice their country in the flames of their luſt.

And if they retain ſome ſmall remains of good-nature and compaſſion for others, and ſeem to have ſome ſenſe of honour and reliſh of liberty left; what poor efforts are they likely to make in defence of it, who have weakened both their bodies and minds, exhauſted their eſtates, and forfeited their reputation by a diſſolute courſe of life?

How unlikely are ſuch men to act the part of wiſe and generous patriots! Or if they engage in any noble enterprize for the ſecurity or recovery of their liberty, how unlikely are they to ſucceed! In a time of great exigency, as that of a foreign invaſion, for inſtance; a nation would be in a very dangerous condition, that ſhould have no better defence than ſuch as theſe could make.

[m] Hoſ. 4. 11.

Moreover; if the liberty of a nation could be preſerved from the danger of a foreign invaſion, without the reſtraint and ſuppreſſion of vice, and the practice and encouragement of virtue; it could ſcarce long ſubſiſt, but would ſink with its own weight.

For whereas religion and virtue ſecure all that is dear to us in the world, by impreſſing the minds of men with an awful regard to the ſacred obligation of an oath, without which the lives, liberties and eſtates of innocent men would be expoſed to perpetual danger; irreligion and profaneneſs tend to weaken and diſſolve this great bond of ſociety: for it may be juſtly feared, that thoſe who make ſo free with the name of God as to ſwear profanely for their diverſion, will in time take the liberty of ſwearing falſely againſt men, when they have a probable proſpect of doing it with impunity; I mean with impunity in this world, by eſcaping the cenſure of the civil magiſtrate.

Again: Religion and virtue make men faithful to their charge, and fit them to ſerve their country in thoſe publick poſts, which are a great truſt on the one hand, and liable to great temptations on the other. Religion teaches private men to be juſt and honeſt in their commerce; to do to others as they would have others do to them; to be courteous and civil to each other; *to give honour to whom honour is due*; to pay due reſpect to their ſuperiors; and to be charitable and com-

compaſſionate to the poor and miſerable: which becoming behaviour to all ranks and degrees of men, mightily tends to the ſupport and happineſs of the community. Vice and irreligion, on the contrary, render men falſe and treacherous, ungrateful, covetous and unjuſt, paſſionate and ill-natur'd, cruel and revengeful: all which have a natural tendency to break the moſt ſacred ties of human ſociety; and, when they grow common, produce jealouſies and ſuſpicions, civil diſcord, hatred and malice, ſpoil and rapine, confuſion, and *every evil work*; and will at length bring not only the utmoſt infamy, but ruin on a nation.

II. This will farther appear from the juſtice of the divine providence in the government of the world.

For ſince communities of men, as ſuch, are rewarded or puniſhed only in this world, the future judgment being that of particular perſons only; 'tis the courſe and method of providence, to reward in this life thoſe cities and nations which encourage and promote religion and virtue, and diſcourage vice and irreligion: to reward them, I ſay, with temporal bleſſings, with peace and plenty, health and long life, ſucceſs and victory.

Nay, when they have provoked God by their ſins; if, upon the warnings of his providence, or the admonitions of his word, they ſeriouſly repent and reform, he is wont to

avert the judgments impending, and to remove the calamities by which he has chaſtiſed them.

This, I ſay, ſeems to be the conſtant courſe of the divine providence towards nations and kingdoms: and tho particular perſons ſometimes proſper in a ſinful courſe, this is no juſt reflection on the providence of God; becauſe the judgment of particular perſons is chiefly reſerved to another world, to that day when *the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be revealed, and every man rewarded according to his works.* And yet God has not left himſelf without witneſs of his great abhorrence of ſin, and his juſt reſentment of the inſolence of ſome bold ſinners, who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves from the common herd by the great enormity of their crimes, in inflicting ſome remarkable puniſhment on them in this world, that others might hear and fear, and do no more ſo wickedly.

But when cities or nations ſin with a high hand, and refuſe to be reform'd, eſpecially after a long exerciſe of God's patience, and the repeated threatnings or warnings he has uſed to reclaim them; he pours forth his wrath upon them in ſome extraordinary judgments, that ſuch national calamities may make a deep impreſſion on ſome perſons at leaſt, to bring them to repentance, and to prevent others from committing the like abominations; to reſtrain men by motives, taken from their temporal intereſt; and

to

to excite magiſtrates to the faithful and ſedulous diſcharge of their duty, in puniſhing vice and profaneneſs; ſince this is neceſſary to their own ſafety, and that of the people under their government, who otherwiſe muſt expect to feel the weight of the divine diſpleaſure in the common ruin.

This wiſe method, uſed by the ſupreme Governor of the world, gives ſome check to the fury and madneſs even of thoſe ſinners who look no farther than the preſent life. Thoſe who are not to be moved by the repreſentation of a future judgment, are touched with the near proſpect of approaching miſery in this life; and from the obſervation they may eaſily make of this uſual method of providence to inflict national puniſhments for national ſins, are under ſuch apprehenſions as curb their exorbitant vices, leſt they ſhould be deprived of all that is dear to them in this world, in which only they have hope.

And without ſuch inſtances of the divine ſeverity, the combinations of the wicked would grow ſo numerous and formidable, that it would be impoſſible for the righteous to ſubſiſt among them; nay, all civil ſocieties would fall into the utmoſt confuſion and diſorder, and the wicked would themſelves deſtroy one another. God therefore diſpenſes *his judgments in the earth, that the inhabitants of the world may learn righteouſneſs*; at leaſt to have ſo much regard to

moral virtues, as are neceſſary to the very being of human ſociety.

III. This is alſo plain from the expreſs declarations of the word of God. *At what inſtant*, ſays the Almighty, *I ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it; if the nation againſt whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my ſight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I ſaid I would benefit them* [n].

Thus God ſet good and evil, life and death, bleſſings and curſes before the nation of Iſrael, with the moſt ſolemn declarations, that that people ſhould be rewarded or puniſhed in this world, according to their virtuous or criminal behaviour; as the holy ſcripture abundantly teſtifies. But this is ſo well known, that I need not cite a great number of particular paſſages [o].

'Tis no leſs evident that the prophets frequently denounced terrible judgments on other cities and nations when their crimes were heinous, and the cry of them reached to heaven, and were ſo provoking, that it was neceſſary the great Judge of the univerſe

[n] Jer. 18. 7——10. | [o] *See* Deut. 28. and *ch.* 32.

ſhould

ſhould aſſert his authority and vindicate his juſtice, in making them publick examples, to warn other cities and nations by their fall.

IV. This is confirmed by the obſervation and experience of mankind in the various ages of the world.

The deſtruction of the old world by an univerſal deluge; the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and thoſe other cities of the plain by fire from heaven; the extirpation of the Canaanitiſh nations, when their iniquities were full; the ſubverſion of the greateſt monarchies and ſtates, of the moſt powerful nations and cities of the world; are all dreadful inſtances of the truth we have been confirming.

The deſolation, miſery and ſlaughter which has befallen ſo many nations by fire and ſword, by famine and peſtilence, by earthquakes and inundations, with which all hiſtory abounds; ſufficiently prove how terrible it is for any community *to fall into the hands of the living God*, when they have highly provoked the eyes of his glory, and abuſed his long-ſuffering and patience by their repeated crimes.

In what a flouriſhing ſtate was the Jewiſh nation while they worſhipped the true God, and obeyed his righteous laws! they enjoyed peace and proſperity, wealth and honour; they were the envy of their neighbours, and

the terror of their enemies: they were the peculiar care of providence; ſucceſsful in their enterprizes, and victorious in war.

But when they degenerated, and the magiſtrates conniv'd at a general depravation of their manners, and were guilty of the like crimes themſelves; when that nation became impious and unjuſt, cruel and uncharitable, intemperate and laſcivious, what judgments and calamities did not befal them?

And when to the reſt of their crimes they added that of infidelity, under extraordinary means of conviction, and to fill up the meaſure of their iniquity, *crucified the Lord of life and glory*, againſt the cleareſt proofs of his divine miſſion; that unhappy people were puniſhed to ſo great a degree, and by ſo great a variety of plagues, that the apoſtle might well ſay, *wrath was come upon them to the uttermoſt* [p]. And as the miſerable remains of that ſinful nation have been for many generations ſcattered on the face of the whole earth; they are a laſting and aſtoniſhing monument of the divine vengeance, to warn the other nations of the world.

I may add to all that has been ſaid, that the moſt excellent means to induce men to the practice of religion and virtue, *viz.* God's ſacred word and ordinances, have been judicially taken away from many cities and countries which had long abuſed them; and the groſſeſt ignorance and errors now reign

[p] 1 Theſſ. ii. 16.

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in many places of the world, where the goſpel of our Redeemer once flouriſhed: for the divine juſtice adjuſts and proportions the puniſhment of communities to the nature and degree of their crimes; and when the goſpel of his kingdom has been long deſpiſed and abuſed, he at length tranſports that ineſtimable treaſure to ſome other city or nation, where that bleſſing may be better improved: and this ſpiritual judgment is often attended with the greateſt of temporal calamities.

And even in heathen nations 'tis well known, that arts and learning have beſt flouriſhed under a ſtrict and virtuous diſcipline; that this promoted the health and vigor of their bodies, gave them wealth and honour, and ſecured their liberty at home, as well as made them victorious abroad. From how ſmall a beginning have ſome ſtates been raiſed to a very high pitch of dignity and power, while thoſe ſocial virtues, which naturally tend to the welfare and proſperity of communities, were practiſed and encouraged among them! But thoſe very nations, that have been ſo famous in hiſtory on this account, have, by indulging vice and profaneneſs, at length become contemptible for their ignorance and barbarity, for their weakneſs and effeminacy, for the baſeneſs and meanneſs of their ſpirits, as well as for their poverty. The ſtrange alteration which Greece and Rome received on this account, are very remarkable inſtances of the truth of the wiſe

man's obſervation in our text, that *righteouſneſs exalteth a nation, but ſin is a reproach to any people.*

Having thus ſhewn you from the reaſon of the thing itſelf in the ordinary courſe of nature; from the juſtice of the divine providence in the government of the world; from the declarations of the word of God; and from the obſervation and experience of mankind in the various ages of the world, that *righteouſneſs* thus *exalts*, and *ſin* thus *depreſſes a nation:* it remains that I cloſe what I have ſaid with a few words of application.

And certainly if virtue conduces ſo much to the happineſs of a nation, it teaches us how much it muſt redound to the benefit of particular perſons: it ſhews us of how great uſe and advantage good men are to a ſociety; how prudent it is to encourage them, and how impolitick as well as unjuſt it is to perſecute them. It farther teaches us how much it becomes magiſtrates to promote virtue and puniſh vice; and by their example, as well as their authority, to reform thoſe under their care: and how much it becomes the miniſters of the goſpel to concur with them in ſo good a deſign; yea, how readily all good men ſhould aſſiſt in this caſe. God requires all to improve the talents he gives them: and all may aſſiſt one way or other in this good work of reformation; either by their authority, their intereſt and reputation;

tion; by their eſtates, their time, or their advice; or however by their example.

There are many, I am ſenſible, who have ſuch a love to righteouſneſs and virtue, ſuch a regard to the glory of God, and the proſperity of their country, as engages their good wiſhes for the ſucceſs of the deſign: but they are intimidated from lending a publick hand to ſo good a work, from the proſpect of the many difficulties and diſcouragements which attend it. But let them conſider the work is glorious in itſelf, 'tis neceſſary, and of the utmoſt conſequence; 'tis a work of juſtice, piety and charity; charity of the moſt extenſive nature, to the ſouls as well as bodies of men; to friends and enemies; to particular perſons and ſocieties; to thoſe of the preſent time, and to future generations. The beſt and nobleſt undertakings have met with oppoſition; but the glory of the work is ſtill increaſed, in proportion to the diſcouragements which are undergone, and the difficulties which are ſurmounted.

Farther; let thoſe who are engaged in this good ſervice, conſider that dreadful conſequences muſt follow the deſertion of it. Let them encourage themſelves with remembering that they have authority on their ſide; the prayers of good men are for them, and God will be with them. Dangers indeed they muſt undergo; but few in this ſervice have reſiſted unto blood. And methinks good men ſhould be greatly animated to ſo uſeful

a work, in the midſt of all the dangers which attend it, when they obſerve that men daily run far greater hazards to obtain honour and wealth in this world, and to gratify their ſenſual and vicious appetites. Immorality is indeed at a great height, and he who engages in the work of reformation, is ſure to meet with violent oppoſition; but the more furiouſly on this occaſion Satan rages, the greater reaſon we have to believe *his time is but ſhort* [q].

To conclude: it is matter of great encouragement to thoſe who are concerned in this pious and generous undertaking, that in the midſt of all theſe difficulties they have met with ſuch conſiderable ſucceſs. And what ſhould moſt of all encourage them, is, that they may aſſure themſelves that the reward they ſhall receive, will be proportionate to the nature and difficulties of the ſervice.

[q] Rev. 12. 12.

SERMON III.

Preach'd at the

Ordination of the Rev^d. Mr. *David Rees*, and two deacons; in a church of Christ at *Limehouse*, Feb. 19, 1705-6.

TITUS i. 5.

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.

WE are told by our Saviour, that *God is a spirit, and* that he *will be worshipped in spirit and in truth*[r]. And that we may worship him with our understandings, 'tis necessary for us to consider the nature, use, and end of those ordinances which he has been pleased to institute, whether for the worship or discipline that is to be exercised in his church: for there is no ground

[r] John 4. 24.

to expect that God will accept any ſervice which is done contrary to his will, or any acts of religious worſhip which he himſelf has not ordained. As all his promiſes are annexed to precepts; ſo it behoves us to perform the one, that we may enjoy the other. And as we are to conſider well what we do with regard to the ordinances wherein we profeſs to ſerve and honour God; ſo we ſhould alſo conſider well in what manner and diſpoſition of mind God requires we ſhould ſerve him: for tho we ſhould perform things rightly, as to the matter of his ordinances, we may be rejected from his preſence with ſhame and confuſion of face, if our minds are not ſo diſpoſed as competently to anſwer the divine requirement. Our hearts muſt not be alienated from God, while we pretend to wait upon him with our tongues, and to honour him with our lips, and ſit before him as his people.

It was a great ſin in the Corinthians, that they did not *diſcern the Lord's body* in the adminiſtration of his holy ſupper [f]; that they wanted that attention and devotion which became them; and did not ſo conſider the end of that inſtitution as they ought. And it behoves us, on the occaſion of this day, to conſider well what we are going about; that we may be right, not only as to the form and order of the adminiſtration of an ordinance

[f] 1 Cor. 11. 29.

of Chriſt, but that the frame and temper of our minds may be ſuited to ſuch a ſolemnity. In order to this I have read this paſſage of the apoſtle to Titus; which contains a direction to him how to behave himſelf in the conſtituting or *ordaining of elders in every city* where the providence of God gave him opportunity of performing that work; as well as *to ſet in order* other things, as he found them wanting. *For this cauſe left I thee in Crete*, &c.

The character of Titus ſeems to have been that of an *evangeliſt*, the next in dignity, as it appears, to the office of an *apoſtle*. Evangeliſts were helpers of the apoſtles in that great work of laying the foundation of churches, and of *ſetting things in order* amongſt them. Their employment was to viſit various churches, to preſide amongſt them, and to ſet things right, or *ſet in order thoſe things that were wanting:* whether they had any province beſides, and were elders of any particular church, is uncertain. The apoſtle here declares the deſign *for which he left Titus in Crete*, where the goſpel had been preached, and where various perſons were converted to chriſtianity, and where it ſeems there were churches already conſtituted. That they might be complete as to their form, that they might be organized with ſuitable officers, Titus receives a charge from the apoſtle. He was indeed *to ſet in order all things that were wanting*; to give

them ſuch directions and counſels, and preſide amongſt them in the exerciſe of diſcipline upon occaſion, ſo as that he might acquaint them with the forms and manners of the houſe of God. But I deſign not to inſiſt on this general exhortation given to Titus, *to ſet in order* all *the things that were wanting*; but on that particular charge only which is adapted to the occaſion of our meeting this day; *to ordain elders in every city, as he had appointed him.* Where it appears,

Firſt, That in the ſeveral cities of Crete there were particular churches which were to be organized. There were to be *elders ordained in every city:* and theſe *elders* were no leſs than *biſhops*; no leſs than what the ſcripture calls *biſhops.* For when the apoſtle was directing what ſort of elders ſhould be ordained, he ſays in the 6th and 7th verſes, which immediately follow the text, *If any be blameleſs, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accuſed of riot, not unruly*; *for a biſhop muſt be blameleſs*, &c. So that an *elder* and a *biſhop* is the ſame thing in the language of the apoſtle. He does not appoint this evangeliſt to conſtitute *dioceſans*, that ſhould have a juriſdiction over the various churches in the cities of Crete; but *in every city* to conſtitute *elders*, that is, where there were perſons fitly qualified for that office. This text therefore gives us an account of the form of the primitive churches: thoſe who could commodiouſly gather together

together in one city or town, in one neighbourhood, formed a church; and each such church might have an *elder* or *elders*, a *bishop* or *bishops*, which is the same thing, constituted amongst them.

Secondly, Here is the sort of officers the apostle charges Titus to fix in these churches. They are called *elders*; which, as I have just now observed, signifies the same as *bishops*. Some suppose that under the title of *elders* is comprehended a lower office in the church, that of *deacons*; as the apostolick office comprehends those which were subordinate to it. And therefore the apostle Peter calls himself *an elder: The elders among you I exhort, who am also an elder* [s]. So we find in the primitive time, before the appointment of deacons, that the apostles themselves did exercise that work, which belonged to the office of a deacon. And because that was some hinderance to the discharge of their more important work, therefore this office was constituted, that they might take care of the poor; and that the apostles, and other ministers of the word, might give attendance unto the special service of *prayer, and the ministry of the word* [t]. And because the character of *deacons* agrees so far with that of *bishops* or *overseers*, in various respects, as appears by the account the apostle gives of their qualifications to Titus and also to Ti-

[s] 1 Pet. 5. 1. [t] Acts 6. 1——4.

mothy;

mothy; it is ſuppoſed that theſe were alſo accounted *elders* in the church, and ſo that this name comprehends both *biſhops* and *deacons:* both which terms are uſed by the apoſtle in the beginning of the epiſtle to the Philippians; *To the ſaints at Philippi, with the biſhops and deacons, grace,* &c.

'Tis true, that the name of *elder* is borrowed from the Jews, and from their civil government; from the magiſtrates among them, who were called elders, and preſided in the city and governed. In alluſion to this, the term is transferred to the church of God, and ſignifies thoſe who preſide and govern in the church. And becauſe *diſcharging of the office of a deacon well, gives a man great boldneſs in the faith* [u], and will give him a conſiderable reputation and authority in the church, and render what he ſays capable of making a greater impreſſion on the people; and beſides, that ſuch a one ought to be a grave perſon; it may, in a lax ſenſe, be ſuppoſed to be comprehended under that name. But however that be, 'tis certain that the ſcripture calls thoſe *elders*, who are elſewhere called *overſeers* or *paſtors*, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew you preſently. And as the apoſtle expreſly charges Titus here *to ordain elders*, if he does not in the ſame word include that deacons ſhould be ordained; yet it may be conſequently inferred, that ſeeing

[u] 1 Tim. 3. 13.

all

all things were to be ſet in order which were wanting in the churches, thoſe churches that wanted deacons, were to have ſuch alſo ordained among them. And if the greater office was taken care of, the inferior muſt have been ſuppoſed to be provided for by the apoſtle in this general direction, that he ſhould *ſet in order thoſe things which were wanting*. So that tho *elders* are ſpoken of preciſely in the text, and not *deacons*; yet ſeeing this general rule gives ſufficient intimation that deacons were to be conſtituted where they were wanting; and ſince there are other ſcriptures which ſhew the nature of this office, and the manner of ordaining to it; I ſhall take the liberty to treat of both, that I may the better anſwer the end of our aſſembling this day.

As to the word *ordain*, which is here uſed by our tranſlators, *ordain elders in every city* [v]; in the original it ſignifies to *conſtitute*, to *create*, to *eſtabliſh* or *ordain*: and 'tis the ſame word which is uſed in the 6th chapter of the Acts, where the apoſtles ſpeak of the ordination of deacons, when they bid the church *look out ſuch men whom they might appoint* [w], i. e. whom they might ordain or conſtitute, or inveſt with that office.

As for the ground on which the apoſtle thus expreſſes himſelf, *as I had appointed thee*; it comprehends the authority upon

[v] Καταστήσης κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους.

[w] Acts 6. 3.

which this charge is founded. As if the apoſtle had ſaid: "I renew and repeat that "charge which I had given thee before I "had directed and appointed thee to do this "work, which becomes an evangeliſt, by my "apoſtolical authority; therefore fulfil this "charge, and execute this miniſtry which "I have committed to thee."

The words of the text being thus opened, I ſhall take occaſion from thence to conſider,

I. The origin and end of this office of elders, and alſo that of deacons.

II. I ſhall treat of the qualifications neceſſary for perſons who are inveſted with theſe offices: which qualifications are diſtinct in ſome reſpects, and agree in others.

III. I ſhall diſcourſe of their inveſtiture; and the manner and order by which this is to be done.

I. I am to diſcourſe of the origin and end of theſe offices.

As to the office of an elder: tho the term, as I intimated before, is borrowed from the civil government among the Jews; yet the office itſelf is of evangelick authority, and was firſt appointed under the goſpel. There is ſomething in the work of elders which makes them reſemble the prieſts and miniſters under the law; but take it in its due compaſs and extent, it is an evangelick appointment,

pointment, ſuited to churches under the goſpel.

We find there are various names given to this ſort of officers: they are called *elders* [x]; they are called *biſhops* [y], or *overſeers* [z]; they are called *paſtors* [a]; they are called *guides* [b]; and they ſeem alſo to be called *teachers* [c]. They may well be called *elders*, which is a term that ſignifies authority; becauſe they have authority from our Lord Jeſus Chriſt to act in his name, and according to the rule of his word. And they are called *rulers* and *governors* upon the ſame account: *Obey them that have the rule over you* [d]; as the apoſtle ſpeaks to the Hebrews. They are called *paſtors*, by way of alluſion to the work and buſineſs of a *ſhepherd*; which does not unaptly repreſent that of an elder of a church. The care, the watchfulneſs, the tenderneſs, which are neceſſary in a ſhepherd, repreſent after what manner the duty of an *elder* ſhould be performed. And our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as he has the title of an *apoſtle* given him [e], ſo he has alſo that of a *paſtor:* he is called the *great paſtor and biſhop of our ſouls*; or, *the great ſhepherd and biſhop of our ſouls* [f]; for 'tis the ſame word. They are called *biſhops* or *overſeers*, becauſe they preſide to ſee that all

[x] Acts 14. 23.
[y] 1 Tim. 3. 1.
[z] Acts 20. 28.
[a] Eph. 4. 11.
[b] Rom. 2. 19.
[c] 1 Cor. 12. 28.
[d] Heb. 13. 17.
[e] Heb. 3. 1.
[f] 1 Pet. 2. 25.

things be done rightly, according to the divine will, in the church of God. They preſide over the flock committed to their care, as it is their buſineſs to take charge of them; to have regard to their ſtate, and to their good and benefit. And on this account the metaphorical term of *watchman* is likewiſe applied to them [g]. An *overſeer* ſignifies as much as a ſteward, who has a charge of perſons or things, and is to take care of what his lord has committed to his truſt. They are called *guides* or *leaders*; and the word in the original is applicable both to thoſe who are ſuch in civil magiſtracy, and in a military conſtitution. The miniſters of the goſpel are repreſented ſometimes as leading the people on in a ſpiritual warfare, encouraging them in their work and duty, and giving them an excellent pattern; leading them up againſt their ſpiritual enemies, and ſhewing courage and patience, and conſtancy under affliction and temptation. Thus, in imitation of magiſtrates, they preſide among the people, conduct and counſel them; and as civil rulers exerciſe a civil diſcipline among them, ſo do they exerciſe the diſcipline of the church, which Chriſt has ordered for the well-being and preſervation of the ſociety. They are called *teachers*, becauſe 'tis a principal part of their work to teach and inſtruct the people in the truth, and to ex-

[g] Heb. 13. 17.

hort

hort them to perform their duty. And they are to teach them by their pattern as well as by their preaching: and therefore one of their qualifications, mentioned by our apoſtle, is, that a *biſhop* or *overſeer* ſhould be *apt to teach* [h].

Now as theſe ſeveral names are given to the ſame perſons in the holy ſcriptures; ſo I am to ſhew you that they ſignify the ſame thing. And there can hardly ariſe any diſpute about this matter, unleſs it be to know whether the names of *biſhop* and *elder* ſignify the ſame thing; and that of a *paſtor* and *teacher*, whether they alſo ſignify the ſame.

As to the names of *biſhop* and *elder*, that they are of the ſame import, I have in part proved already from this text and context; becauſe when the apoſtle orders Titus to *ordain elders*, he tells him what are the proper qualifications of a *biſhop*. So that the apoſtle would not ſpeak to his own purpoſe, if he did not mean by a biſhop the ſame thing as by an elder. The ſame is evident from Acts 20. 28. where we ſee the apoſtle ſent for the elders of the church of Epheſus; and when they came, gave them this charge, *Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made you overſeers.* Thus ſays our tranſlation: but 'tis the ſame word in the original which is rendered *biſhops* in other places of the new teſtament; *Take care of*

[h] 1 Tim. 3. 2.

the flock over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made you biſhops. So that he there calls the *elders biſhops*, or *overſeers.*

Again: when the apoſtle writes to Timothy concerning the qualifications of perſons for *the office of a biſhop*, he mentions to him the ſame qualifications as in this epiſtle to Titus, when he tells him what an *elder* ſhould be; for, as was ſaid before, he is ſpeaking to him concerning the ordination of *elders.* And when he writes to the church of Philippi, he mentions *biſhops* and *deacons* [i], and no other officers; whereas if *elders* had been diſtinct officers from *biſhops*, in all appearance the apoſtle would have named them. And beſides, at Philippi there were divers *biſhops*, ſeveral biſhops in that particular church of Philippi: which is contrary to the notion of a dioceſan biſhop, who preſides over a church, not to ſay many churches ſingly. By all this it appears that *biſhops* and *elders* are the ſame.

And that *paſtors* and *teachers* ſignify the ſame, you may ſee in the epiſtle to the Epheſians [k]; where the apoſtle gives an account of Chriſt's conſtituting, at his aſcenſion, all things neceſſary belonging to his church: *He gave ſome apoſtles, and ſome prophets, and ſome evangeliſts, and ſome paſtors and teachers.* Theſe two laſt words may very well ſignify the ſame office. The *paſtor* ſignifies a perſon

[i] Phil. 1. 1. [k] Eph. 4. 8——12.

who

who rules and governs, as well as inſtructs; and a *teacher* ſignifies one whoſe principal gift was in the knowledge and underſtanding of divine truths, and in being capable to explain them after an apt and pertinent manner to the people. The apoſtle ſeems to ſpeak here of an office, and numbers this amongſt the offices of *apoſtles* and *evangeliſts*; not but that thoſe who are qualified with competent gifts for the inſtruction of the church, may, when they are duly called, preach the goſpel, tho they are not yet ordained to the office of a *paſtor* or *elder:* and tho they can't teach after the ſame authoritative manner as thoſe who are ſolemnly ordained, yet however they may have gifts given them of God for the inſtruction of the people; and may, if called to it, ſpeak to their edification.

As to the other office, *viz.* that of *deacons*; there is but one word uſed to expreſs it. They are called *deacons* or *miniſters:* and 'tis eaſy to know what their work is, by the account given of their character by the apoſtle Paul, and likewiſe by the evangeliſt Luke, in the 6th chapter of the Acts. Their miniſtry concerns the outward ſtate of the church, as the miniſtry of elders in a ſpecial manner has relation to their ſpiritual benefit and advantage.

But now having explained to you what terms are made uſe of to ſignify theſe offices; I proceed to ſhew that they are of divine appointment.

To begin with that which was laſt mentioned, the office of a deacon: The account of their inſtitution, and of the reaſon and neceſſity of it, in Acts 6. and of the requiſite qualifications both there and in 1 Tim. 3. together with the dignity aſcribed to the office, is ſufficient to prove that the inſtitution is of God. As to the other office, ſee what the apoſtle ſays, 1 Cor. 12. 28. *And God hath ſet ſome in the church; firſt, apoſtles; ſecondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healing, helps,* &c. Here we find *apoſtles* an extraordinary office, and the higheſt in the church. Here are *prophets*, who ſeem to have been inſpired to foretel things to come: and here are *teachers*, who ſhould inſtruct in the doctrines of chriſtianity, tho they were not capable of predicting things to come. *God hath ſet*, appointed, or conſtituted *ſome of theſe in the church. Teachers* here ſeem to be ſpoken of as a diſtinct office, and ſo may ſignify the ſame thing as *paſtors* or *biſhops*. See likewiſe what the apoſtle ſays to the Epheſians: *Wherefore he ſaith, When he aſcended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men* [l]. *And he gave ſome prophets, and ſome evangeliſts, and ſome paſtors and teachers* [m]. Here *paſtors* and *teachers* may ſeem to be connected together, as ſignifying the ſame office, and the diſtinct works which belong

[l] Eph. 4. 8. [m] Ver. 11.

to

to them : *For the perfecting the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* And how long was this to last ? *Till we all come to the unity of the faith*[n], &c. Till the church is perfected, there will be need of orders and of offices in it. 'Tis true, the *work* of the *apostles* does not seem any more than the *office* to be necessary to the end. The office need not to be continued, if the work did not continue. When christianity was once planted in the world, and churches form'd, the ordinary offices of *elders* and *deacons* may seem sufficient until the coming of Christ ; or at least till the gospel is sent into such parts of the earth as need ministers of no less dignity than the apostles, and who are furnished with the same power of working miracles that they were.

You see these offices are of divine appointment. This is the origin, the spring of them. *God hath set these in the church,* and *Christ hath given them :* he hath given his Spirit to qualify men for these employments ; and given orders to his apostles to instruct his churches with what officers they should be organiz'd ; and to teach those officers, as well as the people, their work and duty. Which leads me, as I have considered their origin, now to shew their use and end.

As for the office of an *elder,* 'tis appointed in common with that of the *deacon,* for the good of the church ; but, as I intimated

[n] Eph. 4. 12, 13.

before,

before, it regards the ſpiritual good, as the other office regards eſpecially the temporal good of it. The office of an *elder* is conſtituted for this purpoſe; that according to the names which are given them, ſo they ſhould act. They are to miniſter between God and the people; to offer the prayers, the petitions, the confeſſions, and the publick praiſes and thankſgivings of the people to God, in the aſſembly of the church. And as they are to ſpeak from the people to God, ſo they are to ſpeak from God to the people. They are called *teachers*, becauſe they are to teach the people the mind of God: they are to eſtabliſh and confirm them therein by the word of God: they are to exhort, and rebuke, and comfort; to reprove thoſe who decline from the faith, *to rebuke them ſharply, that they may be ſound in the faith*; as the apoſtle directs in the 13th verſe of this chapter, wherein is our text. They are to reprove for the commiſſion of ſin; and thoſe who ſin publickly, are by them to be publickly reproved: *thoſe that ſin before all, ſhould be rebuked before all* [o]. They are to exhort and encourage the people to their duty, and to comfort thoſe who are dejected; to imitate our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is repreſented as a *good ſhepherd* [p], *gently leading thoſe that are with young* [q]; and expreſſing abundance of compaſſion and tenderneſs towards his

[o] 1 Tim. 5. 20.
[p] John 10. 11.
[q] Iſa. 40. 11.

whole

whole flock. They ought to exercise authority in this, but to do it with great prudence and with meekness; to *rebuke with all authority*, as the apostle directs Titus [r], and *with all long-suffering* at the same time, as he directs Timothy [s]. They are to act with abundance of patience and compassion, and yet to abate nothing of the authority of their office: to use that gravity and authority which are requisite for such things as are done in the name of Christ; and yet with the meekness and patience of the blessed Jesus, in imitation of his pattern. And they are to comfort with great compassion and tenderness; to sympathize with their brethren in their various circumstances and conditions. Besides this, they are to preside in the church for the exercise of discipline; to receive in the name of the Lord Jesus those who are fit to be received into a church of Christ, upon their own desire and the consent of the christian society: to reject such as are to be rejected, such as are guilty of heresy, of apostacy, of immorality; all according to the rule which Christ has prescribed in his word. This is to be done with the consent of the church to which they relate. So the apostle orders the incestuous person to be rejected [s]. Thus our Lord Jesus has appointed, that those should be reputed as *heathens and publicans* [t], who will not hear the

[r] Tit. 2. 15.
[s] 2 Tim. 4. 2.
[s] 1 Cor. 5.
[t] Mat. 18. 17.

voice

voice of his word in his church, but obſtinately refuſe to ſubmit to his government: *He that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me; and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me* [u]. They are to preſide, I ſay, for the exerciſe of diſcipline: and here they are *to rebuke with all authority* [v], as there is occaſion, and to pronounce ſentence according to the divine word; thoſe rules being obſerved, which our Lord has appointed, according to the circumſtances of each caſe. They are likewiſe to adminiſter the ordinances which Chriſt has inſtituted. They are to baptize in his name; and this is in order to the adding to the church. They are to adminiſter the Lord's ſupper, as Chriſt has directed and inſtituted, for the edification of his church likewiſe. And when they are called by any church of Chriſt to aſſiſt in the ordination of an elder, or elders, or deacons, they may aſſiſt in ſuch ſervice; for 'tis to be done *by the laying on of the hands of the elderſhip* [w], or presbytery. Thus was this ordinance celebrated in the apoſtle's days; for he himſelf put Timothy in mind of his ordination after that manner. And if, in the apoſtolick times, the *elders* aſſiſted at the ordination of a perſon of ſo great note and worth as Timothy was; if they aſſiſted with the apoſtle, ſuppoſing that the apoſtle was preſent and preſided at that time; we may well ſuppoſe that

[u] Luke 10. 16.
[v] Tit. 2. 15.
[w] 1 Tim. 4. 14.

the

the ſame conſtitution is ſtill preſerved. The apoſtle acted according to what he received from Chriſt; and there is no repeal of this form and order of conſtituting or *ordaining of elders:* and if there be no officers inferior to elders, who are ſpoken of in ſcripture as being concerned in ordaining of others, particularly in ordaining of other elders; why then certainly no inferior officer, or no perſons who have not this office of an elder, may preſume to engage in ſuch a work. The church of Chriſt was eſtabliſhed by the miniſtry of the apoſtles; and I think no body will pretend to find one text of ſcripture which declares that in their time there was any perſon ever conſtituted to the office of an elder or deacon, either by a perſon who was no officer himſelf, or by any number of perſons who were not inveſted with the office of elderſhip. And certainly the church of Chriſt muſt be contented to be governed by the directions of Chriſt and of his apoſtles, who were immediately commiſſioned by him to teach the people *to obſerve all things that he has commanded them* [x].

Well; this is the uſe, this is the end of the office of an elder.

Now as for the office of deacons; you will eaſily ſee what uſe they are of to the church, if you obſerve the reaſon of their

[x] Mat. 28. 20.

con-

conſtitution in the 6th of the Acts, at the beginning. *And in thoſe days, when the number of the diſciples was multiplied, there aroſe a murmuring of the Grecians againſt the Hebrews, becauſe their widows were neglected in the daily miniſtration,* &c. *'Tis not reaſonable,* ſay the apoſtles, *that we ſhould leave the word of God, and ſerve tables. Wherefore, look ye out ſeven men of honeſt report, full of the Holy Ghoſt and of wiſdom, whom we may appoint over this buſineſs. But we will give ourſelves continually to prayer, and to the miniſtry of the word:* q. d. "That will be work enough for "us; therefore look out ſuch as may be "appointed deacons, or *miniſters to ſerve* "*tables.*" It ſeems their office regards the outward condition of the church. The *tables* of the poor were to be provided for by their care and management out of the ſtock of the church. The table of the miniſter may likewiſe be ſuppoſed to be comprehended in this expreſſion of *ſerving tables.* The tables of the miniſters were by them to be taken care of, out of the allowance which the church gave to that purpoſe. And the tables of ſtrangers; for the churches in the primitive times were full of hoſpitality to ſtrangers, and had often occaſion to entertain thoſe who came from other churches. Theſe tables were to be taken care of: and they had the care alſo of the Lord's table, to provide the elements for that holy ſupper. Thus you may eaſily diſcern of how great uſe this

office was for the well-ordering of the church, and for the exercise of charity. And as you see how much the spiritual nourishment and edification of the people is concerned in the regular discharge of the office of an elder; so you likewise see what care was taken of their outward circumstances by the appointment of deacons.

Having discoursed of the origin and end of these offices, which you find are constituted plainly in the scripture, and design'd for excellent purposes; I proceed now,

II. To consider the qualifications prescribed in the sacred word for persons who are to be invested with these offices. And here I may refer you to the context for the qualifications of a bishop or elder.

If any be blameless. Where is the man who lives and sins not? But in the language of scripture, to be *blameless* or *harmless* is the same with being of a sober and reputable conversation. *Who can stand before God, and justify himself in his sight?* Yet there are many who can appeal to men as Samuel did of old; *Whom have I wronged? whom have I defrauded*[y]? There are many who, by the grace of God, have been taught to walk so *soberly, righteously and godly in the world*[z], that there is no remarkable stain upon their lives, such as should bring a discredit to their

[y] 1 Sam. 12. 3. [z] Tit. 2. 12.

character

character and office; and that's the apoſtle's meaning here: for he ſays, in the parallel place to Timothy, *they muſt have a good report amongſt them that are without* [1]. Perſons who have been of a debauched, profligate converſation, tho they be converted, ſeem to be excluded from being qualified for the miniſterial office; becauſe tho they be altered, yet the diſreputation to religion is like to be ſuch, that 'tis probable more hurt will be done by that ſtain which ſin has left upon their characters, than good can be expected from their miniſtry. To this purpoſe the apoſtle ſays farther,

He muſt be *the husband of one wife*. It may be asked; Does the apoſtle then allow that thoſe who were not choſen to the office of the miniſtry might have two wives? No; but he ſeems to have regard to their condition before they became chriſtians. Polygamy was a reproach among ſober heathens; and therefore if a man had had two wives, after he became converted to chriſtianity, this man was not to be put into the office of the miniſtry, becauſe of the ſcandal of his having been guilty of that vice before. I know not how, well, to interpret the words of the apoſtle otherwiſe: for we muſt not imagine that he gives this as a diſcriminating character, as if there were many members of the church who had two wives at the

[1] 1 Tim. 3. 7.

time

time they were members; and if there were none who had two wives together, what need the apoſtle give this as a neceſſary character, to ſhew that a perſon could not be qualified for this office unleſs he were the husband of but one wife? So that it ſeems to relate to the polygamy committed before they entred into the church; and to ſignify that if they had had two wives before, this left ſuch a ſcandal upon them, that it could not agree to the *blameleſs* character of a miniſter, to have been ever guilty of it. This ſeems to me the plaineſt and eaſieſt ſenſe of the place.

Having faithful children, not accuſed of riot, or unruly: that is, children who are not heathens, as ſome render it. For if a perſon were to be inveſted with the office of an elder, and his family were heathenized, this might be *of ill report*; and might make people imagine he had not taken that care and pains to inſtruct them as he ought to have done in the doctrines and duties of the chriſtian religion. For it may ſeem to have been a much eaſier matter for a perſon who was maſter of a family to convince them of the ſin of idolatry, and bring them to hearken to the doctrines of chriſtianity, than for another to have converted them to it. And there is a vaſt difference between a man's having his children profeſs'd idolaters, and their profeſſing chriſtianity, tho perhaps they have not the characters of a true converſion.

This latter caſe ought not to hinder him from engaging in the office of an elder, if it is not owing to his neglect of inſtructing them. This ſeems to amount to the ſame character elſewhere given, *that he ſhould rule his own family well* [b]; he ſhould ſo manage himſelf in the government of them, that no remarkable blemiſh ſhould be upon them; that is, ſuppoſing he has a family.

For a biſhop muſt be blameleſs. The apoſtle repeats it again: a man of an innocent and holy converſation; one who has had no remarkable ſtain upon his life.

As the ſteward of God. This denotes the great charge that is committed to him; the truſt repoſed in him.

Not ſelf-willed. For this might breed great diſorder and diſturbance in a church. If a man can't be humble, condeſcending and complaiſant, ſubjecting himſelf to thoſe who are of low degree, ſo far as his office will allow him, in order to win them to the practice of religion; he is like to do but little ſervice to the intereſt of Chriſt or the ſouls of men: on the other hand, he will be apt to do a great deal of miſchief; for a moroſe, a proud man, one of a haughty temper, will be like to raiſe the ſame paſſions in others, and ſet a church of Chriſt into a flame. He is not therefore to be *ſelf-willed.*

[b] 1 Tim. 3. 4, 5.

Not

Not ſoon angry. Not a paſſionate, teſty man, ſet into a flame upon all occaſions; but one who has patience and meekneſs, and knows how to govern his own paſſions.

Not given to wine. It would be a terrible ſtain indeed upon him if he ſhould be ſenſual, if he ſhould be intemperate: for this was counted criminal among the heathens themſelves; and it would raiſe in their minds a loathing of ſuch a perſon who bore the ſacred character of an elder, and yet was given to drunkenneſs. *To wine*; that is, much wine.

No ſtriker. This would be very unbecoming his character: he is to rule and govern as a magiſtrate in the church of God: he is to govern by reaſon and by arguments, and motives of religion, by ſuch as are drawn from ſcripture; but he is not to uſe force and violence: this is intirely inconſiſtent with his character, and the dignity of his office.

Not given to filthy lucre. This is in itſelf a ſordid vice, and becomes a miniſter of Chriſt the leaſt of any thing in the world; or rather, is the moſt misbecoming imaginable. 'Tis a ſordid thing, I ſay, in itſelf, and called *idolatry* in ſcripture [c]. *The love of money is the root of all evil* [d]. It may be well called *filthy lucre* in this caſe on many occaſions: as when ſuch perſons are capable of bribery for the perverſion of juſtice, or

[c] Col. 3. 5.

[d] 1 Tim. 6. 10.

can allow themſelves to do any thing that is contrary to the will of God, being prepoſſeſſed by gifts; when they ſeek gain after an inordinate manner, and uſe unlawful means to accumulate it; they are then *given to filthy lucre*. This is not at all ſpoken in prejudice to the allowance which the word of God gives to the maintenance of a miniſtry; but 'tis very unbecoming them to ſeek gain after any ſordid and baſe manner.

But a lover of hoſpitality: a generous, liberal man, ready to entertain ſtrangers. For it would bring an ill character upon a miniſter of the goſpel, if he ſhould behave himſelf rudely and unhandſomly towards any perſon, of whatſoever denomination; towards thoſe who are of a higher ſtation in the world, or a lower. He ought to be charitable to the poor, kind to ſtrangers; to behave himſelf after a generous and liberal manner, where there is a juſt occaſion given for it; becauſe this is very becoming the goſpel, and tends to gain a credit to religion. And by the way, this intimates the duty of the people: for it would be a hard preſcription to order the miniſters of the goſpel to be *given to hoſpitality*, if they were not to be allowed ſuch an honourable maintenance as might qualify them to be hoſpitable.

A lover of good men. And that will appear by the choice of his company. He ought to be one who keeps honourable company, the company of pious and good men. That

ſhews

ſhews his love to ſuch, by his delight in their converſation.

Sober, juſt, holy, temperate. *Sober* and grave in his deportment; *juſt* and honeſt in all his dealings, and in the manner of his adminiſtration; *holy* and pious in his behaviour in the worſhip of God, as well as in his private converſation. He ſhould be a man very pious and religious; devoted to prayer, reading and meditation when alone, as well as behaving himſelf after a religious and devout manner in the aſſembly of the ſaints. He ſhould be *temperate*, i. e. capable of governing his paſſions; not addicted to ſenſual pleaſures, but maintaining that purity and moderation in all his behaviour which becomes one who is devoted to the immediate ſervice of God.

Holding faſt the faithful word, as he has been taught; that he may be able, by ſound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainſayers. A man of a ſtable mind, who, when he has learned the truth, *holds it faſt*, and *is not carried about with every wind of doctrine:* one who has a ſolid judgment, and ſhews a conſtancy and integrity in adhering to truth. *As he hath been taught the faithful word, that he may be able, by ſound doctrine, to exhort and convince gainſayers*; to exhort thoſe who have embraced it to live according to it, and to put to ſilence thoſe who gainſay it.

Thus the apoſtle gives the character, or qualifications of an elder, in writing to Titus. And he ſpeaks after the ſame manner to Timothy; 1 Tim. 3. 2, *&c. A biſhop then muſt be blameleſs, the husband of one wife; vigilant, ſober, of good behaviour, given to hoſpitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no ſtriker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient; not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own houſe, having his children in ſubjection with all gravity*, &c. Tho there is ſome little variation, yet the characters are much the ſame. There is *vigilance:* he muſt watch, he muſt be induſtrious to perform his duty ſtrictly; he muſt be a man of a vigilant temper. And as he muſt be *given to hoſpitality*, and *of good behaviour*; ſo likewiſe *apt to teach:* all which is to the ſame purpoſe as you have heard before.

Not a novice, leſt being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Not a novice; that is, not one newly converted to chriſtianity. The apoſtle does not mean that he man yot be a young man; for we ſee Timothy was employed in this ſacred ſervice tho he was young; therefore ſays the ſame apoſtle, *let no man deſpiſe thy youth* [e]. Timothy had been inſtructed from his childhood in the ſcriptures, and had been converted ſome time; ſo that his mind was imbued and tinctured early with the principles

[e] 1 Tim. 4. 12.

of

of chriſtianity, and therefore he was not a *novice*. The advancement of a novice to ſo honourable an office may puff him up with pride, and ſo he *may fall into the condemnation of the devil:* and therefore it is not fit that ſuch ſhould be conſtituted elders.

Moreover, he muſt have a good report of them that are without. So great care does God take of the honour and reputation of religion, that a man who has not *a good report among them that are without*, becauſe he has been profane, is not qualified to be a miniſter of Chriſt. *He muſt have a good report of them that are without, leſt he fall into reproach, and the ſnare of the devil:* he may be reproached otherwiſe with thoſe vices which have rendered him obnoxious to cenſure; and this may diſcredit his miniſtry, and ſo be an occaſion of his falling into temptation. He ought to be a perſon of ſuch a character and behaviour, that his converſation may appear blameleſs and innocent to all. Thus have I explained to you the qualifications which the ſcriptures require in a perſon inveſted with the office of an elder.

Now follow the qualifications of deacons: which you have in the ſame chapter. *Likewiſe muſt the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine* [f], &c. They muſt be *grave:* it would be very unſeemly that any ſhould be inveſted with this office if they were perſons of great levity of mind, or va-

[f] 1 Tim. 3. 8——13.

nity of humour, or too young to be truſted with the treaſure and ſtock of the church. They muſt be *grave* in the temper of their mind, whatſoever their years are.

Not double-tongued. For as they may do much miſchief if they can't govern their tongues; ſo likewiſe if they are not men of great integrity and ſincerity. And as they ſhould not be *double-tongued*, ſo not *double-minded.* The apoſtle intimates that they ought to be ſincere and upright, and open in their converſation.

Not given to much wine. For as this is a great diſreputation to any member; ſo much more to a deacon, who is an officer in the church of Chriſt.

Not greedy of filthy lucre. He is to be faithful and juſt in his actions; and ſo to diſpoſe of the ſtock of the church, as not only to approve his integrity, but his delight in the good work in which he is engaged.

Holding the myſtery of faith in a pure conſcience. One who underſtands the fundamental principles of the chriſtian religion; or elſe he would be a ſcandal to his office. And he ſhould be one who *holds it in a pure conſcience*; one who appears to *have a good conſcience towards God and towards men*, that he may faithfully diſcharge his duty. For if he has not this character, how can it be expected he ſhould diſcharge his duty well?

Let theſe alſo firſt be proved. That is, it ſeems, they are to be proved according to

theſe

theſe characters and rules. We are to conſider and examine what perſons bear theſe characters upon them; and if, upon obſervation and remarking of their lives, and the manner of their behaviour, theſe characters are competently found, *then let them uſe the office of a deacon, being found blameleſs.*

Even ſo muſt their wives be grave. The wives of deacons ought to be ſober, grave perſons; and by the ſame reaſon thoſe of elders, if they have wives.

No ſlanderers; ſober, faithful in all things. Or elſe they might be capable of defrauding the church and the poor.

The deacons muſt be *the husbands of one wife*, ſuch as never had the ſcandal of polygamy upon them; *ruling their own houſes well*, as was ſaid before concerning the elders or biſhops. And for encouragement in the faithful diſcharge of this office, the apoſtle concludes with theſe words: *For they that uſe the office of a deacon well, purchaſe to themſelves a good degree, and great boldneſs in the faith, which is in Chriſt Jeſus* [g].

You may ſee likewiſe ſomething of their qualifications in Acts 6. 3. *Look ye out among you ſeven men of honeſt report, full of the Holy Ghoſt and wiſdom.* And tho that was a time when many private chriſtians were after an extraordinary manner *filled with the Holy Ghoſt*; yet the character in general is ſtill

[g] 1 Tim. 3. 13.

requiſite,

requisite, as it signifies persons of remarkable piety, and who have wisdom and discretion to manage the office well: such as have bowels of compassion, on the one hand, for those who are in necessity; and such a measure of prudence, on the other, as will not suffer them easily to be imposed upon by such as may be apt to crave what others may want more. And so accordingly *they chose Stephen, a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost* [h], &c.

Thus have I, as briefly as I well could, represented to you the qualifications necessary for persons who are to be invested in these offices. It remains that I speak,

III. Of the investing with these offices persons so qualified. There is something belongs to this on the part of God; something on the part of the church; something on their own account; and something on the account of those who are to ordain them.

On the part of God; these qualifications must be given by him. 'Tis he who has set and constituted these offices in his church; 'tis he only who can qualify and fit men for the discharge and performance of the duties belonging to them. 'Tis Christ who is *ascended on high*, who *gives gifts unto men* [i], and fits them for his work, of whatsoever kind.

[h] Acts 6. 5. | [i] Eph. 4. 8.

Then

Then on the part of the church to which ſuch perſons do relate who are ſo gifted and qualified; it belongs to them to chuſe them, to call them out to this ſervice, to deſire them to diſcharge that work and miniſtry for which God ſeems to have fitted and qualified them.

As to the perſons who are ſo qualified and choſen; it belongs to them to devote themſelves to the ſervice of God in that office to which they are called, and reſpectfully to accept of ſuch ſervice for the honour of God and the good of his church.

And it belongs, as I ſaid before, to thoſe who are themſelves inveſted with the office of elderſhip, to ordain ſuch to this work, and that by impoſition of hands.

1. I ſay, it belongs to God to qualify men for offices in his church. We are not to thruſt out any into his harveſt who are not qualified and fitted for his work and ſervice. To ſpeak particularly of the office of an elder; 'tis God who muſt diſpoſe and prepare men, by his Spirit, for it. What we are to regard is, as near as we can, to fix on thoſe whom God has already deſtin'd and choſen to ſuch a purpoſe: and this will beſt appear to us by the qualifications with which he has furniſhed them. 'Tis he who gives gifts and graces unto men; and 'tis a work not to be enter'd upon unleſs men are competently qualified of God: for beſides the diſhonour they may bring to God and religion, what comfort

fort can they have in that work for which they are not, in ſome meaſure, fitted? There will be nothing but diſcouragement to themſelves; and what is like to be the conſequence to the people, under their care, but want of edification, and many inconveniences, under which a church muſt be ſuppoſed to languiſh? If perſons are choſen who are not, in ſome competent meaſure, fitted for the work, what can be expected but that the people will have huſks inſtead of bread; and that they will decline in their ſpiritual vigor, for want of thoſe ſupplies which God has ordained for their edification? No man is therefore to be called to ſuch a work who is not competently fitted and prepared of God for it, by thoſe qualifications you have heard explained.

2. The church is to be concerned. This is expreſly mentioned, in reference to deacons, in the Acts of the apoſtles: *Look ye out among you* ſuch *men, that we may ordain them* [k]. The people muſt chuſe them; and we find they did ſo: *The ſaying pleaſed the whole multitude, and they choſe Stephen, a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghoſt* [l], &c. They choſe them, *and ſet them before the apoſtles* [m]; choſe them fairly, and preſented them to the apoſtles to ordain them. And if the deacons are to be choſen of the church, there is a parity of reaſon that elders ſhould

[k] Acts 6. 3.
[l] Ver. 5.
[m] Ver. 6.

be

be chosen too; nay, there seems to be a greater reason for it, that the consent of the people should be had to whom they must commit their souls. If they have a right to chuse such officers in the church, to whom they commit the care and management of some part of their money; 'tis certainly most reasonable they should consent who should teach them, and who should govern them. Even Christ himself, tho *he has all power and authority*, will not preside, in a church-constitution and state, over those who are not willing to be subject to him. He has indeed a kingdom and dominion over the whole world; and not only all men, but angels and spirits are subjects to him. But as to the peculiar government of his church, he admits none into the number of his subjects but those who consent to be governed by him: so little right have any to impose upon others in these things; so little right, by persecution, to compel men to be christians. Christ will have *a willing people in the day of his power* [n]: and as he will not govern men without their own consent, and therefore they must devote themselves to him to be members of his church; so no man has a right to take upon him the government of a society of christians, without their choice and approbation. But this is a matter so plain in itself, and so little, I believe, contested

[n] Psal. 110. 3.

by

by any amongst you, that I need not insist on it.

3. Besides the election of the people, there must be the consent of the person chosen to the office of an elder or deacon. So the apostle Peter prescribes to elders, that they should *take the oversight of the flock, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind* [o]. They are not to enter upon this work by compulsion, but being prompted thereto by just and solid reasons; the consideration of the goodness of the work, and the advantage which may be thereby rendered to the interest of our Lord Jesus Christ; the benefit which souls may receive, and the reward that shall be given at the time when our Lord Jesus shall appear; the crown of glory which he will give to those who shall *turn many to righteousness* [p], and who *have watched* over his people, that when he appears, they may *give up their account with joy* [q]. It must not be *by constraint:* for Christ will have *a willing people*, and willing officers in his church; those who, upon the most deliberate and mature consideration, will say as some of the Hebrew servants did concerning their masters, *I like my master and his family* [r]: and accordingly they had their ears bored, and became their servants for ever. So those who love our Lord Jesus Christ: "I love his work, I chearfully en-

[o] 1 Pet. 5. 2.
[p] Dan. 12. 3.
[q] Heb. 13. 17.
[r] Deut. 15. 16, 17.

"gage

" gage myſelf in it; tho I muſt ſay, *Who is* " *ſufficient for theſe things*[r]? Yet ſeeing I " love my Lord and maſter, I love his ſer- " vice; ſeeing he takes it as one of the great- " eſt inſtances of love to him, ſeeing he *bids* " *me feed his ſheep*[s]; and ſeeing he has, in " ſome meaſure, qualified me for his work, " and his people have called me to it; I will " be a ſervant in his houſe as long as I live." Not that a man is fixed down to this or that particular ſociety of chriſtians as long as he lives: there may be conſent on all hands, which may make it practicable for him to remove. But there muſt be a willingneſs of mind. God will have a ſacrifice offered willingly to him; and therefore he who is devoted to this work, muſt offer himſelf as a free-will offering. And indeed a man had need have a willing mind to it: or elſe, when he foreſees the various cenſures and reflections which are like to be caſt upon him, the many burdens he muſt bear, and that the more cenſured, the more diligent and faithful he muſt be in his duty; he makes a very unhappy choice of an employment. A man had need be willing, who foreſees all this, and yet ſhall engage in it: for it muſt not be for baſe ends, but *of a ready mind*, to ſerve God and honour him.

4. A perſon to be inveſted in this office, muſt be ordained *by the presbytery*, or elderſhip; that is, by thoſe who are elders themſelves:

[r] 2 Cor. 2. 16. [s] John 21. 15, 16, 17.

ſelves: and this *with laying on of hands.* There are ſeveral paſſages of ſcripture which may give us light into this affair.

There was an extraordinary ordination of an apoſtle in the 1ſt of the Acts, an apoſtle in the room of Judas. It ſeems *they appointed two, Joſeph called Barſabas, and Matthias. And they prayed and ſaid; Thou, Lord, who knoweſt the hearts of all men, ſhew which thou haſt choſen* [t]. Here ſeems to have been an extraordinary way; they fix'd upon two they thought were beſt qualified, and then it was referred to a lot. We need not doubt this was by the direction of the apoſtles of our Lord. *And the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apoſtles* [u].

As to the ordination of deacons, you find that 'twas done by impoſition of hands; Acts 6. 3. *Whom we may appoint*, ſays the apoſtle; that is, whom we may ordain *over this buſineſs* [v]: the ſame word which is uſed in our text, *that thou mayſt ordain*, or appoint *elders in every city.* It follows, *ver.* 6. *whom they ſet before the apoſtles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.* Here is ordination of deacons, and that by the impoſition of hands. See moreover the 13th chapter of the Acts, at the beginning: *Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas and Simeon,* &c. *The Holy Ghoſt ſaid, Separate*

[t] Acts 1. 23, 24.
[u] Ver. 26.
[v] Οὓς καταστήσωμεν ἐπὶ τῆς χρείας ταύτης.

me

me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Some think it was for that special service to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, that they were ordained upon this occasion; for indeed the apostle Paul received his ministry immediately from our Lord Jesus Christ: but if he, upon this occasion, did receive an ordination, tho to fulfil a particular kind of ministry, by imposition of hands; by a stronger reason should we, in ordinary times, submit to it for the service of a church of Christ. See moreover the 14th of the Acts. You read there of the travels and sufferings of Paul and Barnabas, and of their progress in the work of God: and, in the 22d verse, how they *returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch; confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith: and when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they had believed.* They ordained them elders in the church, and prayed with fasting: and there is no doubt to be made of the imposition of hands, seeing we read of it in other cases of the like kind. For that purpose see what the apostle says to his son Timothy: *Lay hands suddenly on no man; neither be partaker of other mens sins*[w]. This is to the same purpose as when

[w] 1 Tim. 5. 22.

he gives the qualifications of a biſhop: as much as to ſay, "conſider well that thoſe "be duly qualified on whom you ſhall lay "your hands." And 'tis hard to ſuppoſe it of any other than the ordination of perſons to the office of elderſhip, or deacons. And then again, in this ſame epiſtle: *Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery* [x], or of the elderſhip.

Thus the matter ſeems plain from ſcripture. But becauſe there are ſome objections moved againſt this, both againſt ordination of elders, and againſt doing it by impoſition of hands; 'tis requiſite I ſhould ſay a little more to it.

'Tis objected by ſome, concerning miniſters, that other elders are not ſaid to ordain them beſides the apoſtles; and that the apoſtleſhip comprehended in it elderſhip: and therefore they think this matter is now antiquated and deceaſed with the office of the apoſtleſhip.

I anſwer: we are to take that in Timothy, concerning *laying on of the hands of the elderſhip*, to ſignify thoſe elders who were in the church of which Timothy was a member; becauſe this is the moſt natural, eaſy, and obvious ſenſe; unleſs there be ſome reaſon to compel us to take the words in another ſenſe. He does not call the apoſtles *the elderſhip*; nor is this phraſe uſed of them, ex-

[x] 1 Tim. 4. 14.

cluſive

cluſive of others. So that tho the apoſtleſhip did, as the greater office, comprehend the leſſer: yet when *elderſhip* is ſpoken of with *laying on of hands*, there is no neceſſity to underſtand this of apoſtles; for there were elders who were not apoſtles.

In the next place we are farther to conſider, that in the commiſſion to *teach* and to *baptize*, and then *to teach* the people *all things that Chriſt had commanded* [y]; if this ſhould be limited only to the apoſtles who did theſe things at the firſt, what ſhall become of religion in the world, ſince there are no apoſtles to inſtruct the people, and to baptize? But the nature of the duties enjoined, and the terms of the commiſſion, the extent of which ſhould be *to the end of the world*; ſhew it ſhould have regard to the ordinary miniſters of the word: and they are *elders*, and they may teach and baptize, and inſtruct in all things relating to the houſe of God.

'Tis farther objected, that *the appointment* ſpoken of, or the *ordaining*, ſignifies no more than that thoſe apoſtles or elders preſided, ſo far as to give inſtruction how ſuch things ſhould be done; but that they did not ordain the perſons.

This is putting a mere force upon the words; for can there be words more expreſs than that which ſignifies *appoint*, *ordain*, or *conſtitute*? This is uſed with reference to elders and deacons: and in the 14th chapter

[y] Mat. 28. 19, 20.

of the Acts, the word uſed ſignifies a *choice*[z]; and if it be preciſely to be referred to the apoſtles, ſignifies their delegation of them to the work, tho actually choſen by the people, according to the rite which Chriſt has conſtituted in his church. Beſides, 'tis evident who it was that ordained them, ſeeing with the word *ordain* is joined the ceremony of laying on of hands. Did they lay on their hands, and all this not ſignify they ordained them? This would be ſtrangely to pervert the common ſenſe of the word.

'Tis farther objected, that the text in the 14th of the Acts, where they are ſaid to have *ordained*, ſignifies *election:* and ſo the meaning of it is only that they were preſent in that church, and the church elected and ordained while the apoſtles were preſent.

But 'tis certain, that whether you will call it *ordaining* or *election*, it is expreſly mentioned as the act of the apoſtles; and the ceremony they did it with, was the impoſition of hands. 'Tis true, that word does properly ſignify *electing*, or *chuſing by holding up the hand.* It was a cuſtom among the Athenians to chuſe their magiſtrates by way of vote or ſuffrage; and when candidates were ſet up, the matter was decided by the majority of hands: and therefore the word in the original, which is tranſlated *electing* or *chuſing*, ſignifies lifting up of hands. This

[z] χειροτονήσαντες.

cuſtom

cuſtom was transferred to the Romans. 'Tis true, they had another cuſtom of chuſing magiſtrates, by lot; and the apoſtles conſtituting an apoſtle among them this way, may ſeem to reſemble that. As the ordinary manner of chuſing officers among the Greeks, was by holding up the hand by way of ſuffrage; this, I ſay, was transferred to the Romans, and other nations, in their choice of magiſtrates. But then the word is likewiſe uſed in ſeveral authors, both profane and eccleſiaſtical, to ſignify the *ordination* or *conſtituting* of perſons *in an office*. And to this purpoſe it ſeems to be uſed concerning Paul and Barnabas, in the text under conſideration. 'Tis hard to make that the act of the people which the text makes the act of Paul and Barnabas: the diſpute is about the word, and their act of ordaining expreſs'd by that word. If *they* are ſaid to chuſe, we muſt ſuppoſe 'twas their approbation of the choice of the church; their agreeing ſuch perſons ſhould be ſent out upon ſuch work, and be inveſted with ſuch an office: but there cannot be an ordination without the concurrence of the elderſhip.

But the word is uſed, as I ſaid before, by good authors, both ſacred and profane, to ſignify a perſon's being *ordained to*, or *inveſted with*, an office. Maximus Tyrius, when he is ſpeaking of the horſe of Darius,

[a] Acts 14. 23.

at whoſe neighing he was *appointed* to be king, by a previous agreement amongſt the nobles of Perſia; uſes this word, to expreſs his being fix'd in that office, by the neighing of the horſe: he ſays, *the horſe choſe him by ſuffrage* [b]. The meaning is plainly this; that he was *conſtituted*, or *ordained* to be a prince, by that token and mark which they had agreed upon; he whoſe horſe firſt neighed when they came into ſuch a place. Now the word, as there uſed, ſhews that 'tis impoſſible it ſhould be underſtood as ſome people pretend it always ſignifies.

Philo, who was contemporary with the apoſtles themſelves, uſes the word in this ſenſe, concerning Joſeph's being *conſtituted* Pharaoh's lieutenant [c]. And ſo Theodoret, on the ſame occaſion [d]. There could be no ſuffrage, ſtrictly ſpeaking, where there was but a ſingle perſon to conſtitute him in an office; and therefore it muſt mean his *ordaining him* with this character, that he ſhould be the greateſt man next the king. And there is a paſſage in Joſephus, where the word χειροτονεῖν is uſed to the ſame purpoſe, with regard to king

[b] Αὐτὸν ἐχειροτόνησεν ἐπὶ τῷ ἀρχῇ ὑρεισὴς ἵππος. Max. Tyr. Diſſertat. 19.

[c] Ὅτε βασιλέως ὑπαρχῆς ἐχειροτονεῖτο. Phil. Jud. Lib. περὶ Ἰωσὴφ. Ita de Moſe—ἡγεμὼν ἐχειροτονεῖτο, &c. Ibid.

[d] Ἁπάντων με τῶν κατὰ τῷ οἰκίαν κηδεμόνα κεχειροτόνηκεν ὁ δεσπότης, καὶ τὸν νεώνητον ἄνδρα ἡγεμονεύειν ἀπάντων ἐκέλευσε. Theodoret. orat. 8. de providentia, tom. 4. p. 413. edit. Paris. 1642.

Alex-

Alexander's appointing Jonathan high-prieſt of the Jews [e].

Chryſoſtom particularly uſes this very word of *chuſing by ſuffrage*, or *lifting up the hand*; but he uſes it to ſignify *ordination*, when performed by perſons who are in office themſelves. *This*, ſays he, *is ordination*, (or you may call it a delegation) *the hand is laid upon the man*; *but 'tis God who works all, and his hand firſt touches the head of the perſon ordained*, (there the ſame word is uſed) *if he be ordained as he ought to be* [f]: there the ſame word is uſed again. So that 'tis plain Chryſoſtom uſes this word to ſignify the act of ordaining by the touching or impoſition of hands. And when he ſpeaks of thoſe words of our Saviour, of *praying to the Lord of the harveſt to ſend forth labourers into his harveſt* [g]; he ſays, *'tis Chriſt who preſently or immediately ordains them* [h]: and he uſes the word χειροτονεῖν to ſignify the act of Chriſt; which is far from the ſenſe of an election by the people.

[e] Βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξανδρος Ἰωνάθῃ τῷ ἀδελφῷ χαίρειν. Τιὼ μὲν ἀνδρείαν σε καὶ πίσιν ἀκηκόαμεν πάλαι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πεπόμφαμεν πρὸς σε περὶ φιλίας καὶ συμμαχίας· χειροτονοῦμέν δὲ σε σήμερον ἀρχιερέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων, καὶ φίλον ἐμὸν καλεῖσθαι. Antiq. lib. 13. cap. 2. p. 559. edit. Hudſon.

[f] Τοῦτο ἡ χειροτονία ἐστὶν· ἡ χεὶρ ἐπίκειται τῷ ἀνδρὶ· τὸ δὲ πᾶν ὁ θεὸς ἐργάζεται, καὶ ἡ αὐτοῦ χεὶρ ἐστιν ἡ ἁπλωμένη τῆς κεφαλῆς τοῦ χειροτονουμένου, ἐὰν ὡς δεῖ χειροτονῆται. Chryſoſt. homil. 14. in Acta, tom. 4. edit. Savil. pag. 690.

[g] Luke 10. 2.

[h] Αὐτὸς αὐτὸς εὐθέως χειροτονεῖ. Id. homil. 32. in Mat. tom. 2. p. 218.

The eccleſiaſtical canons likewiſe uſe the word in the ſame ſenſe as our tranſlators, who render it *appoint:* and whatever diſpute there is about the author or authors of theſe canons, there is no doubt it is an antient book. *Let a biſhop*, or overſeer, *be ordained by two or three biſhops* [i]. Here the ſame word is uſed as in Acts 14. And 'tis plain that this muſt refer to ordination, and not to election: and ſo Balſamon underſtands it [k]. And thus Heſychius, the Grammarian, interprets the word χειροτονῆν by καθισαῖ, which is the ſame word that is uſed in our text, and ſignifies ſtrictly and ſimply to conſtitute; as well as by ψηφίζειν, to determine by ſuffrage.

Since therefore the word χειροτονῆν is uſed both in eccleſiaſtical writers and profane authors to ſignify one perſon's *ordaining*, or *ſending forth* another, *conſtituting* another in an office; it ſeems moſt natural to underſtand it ſo in Acts 14. ſeeing the word there muſt be referred to Paul and Barnabas; and *ſuffrage* does not agree to them ſo well, that being the act of the people.

As to the impoſition of hands; there is an objection againſt that, becauſe extraordinary and miraculous gifts are not now given as they were in the apoſtles times. But it can't be denied that impoſition of

[i] Ἐπίσκοπος χειροτονείσθω ὑπο ἐπισκόπων δυο ἢ τριῶν. Can. 1. Apoſtol.

[k] Vid. Theodor. Balſamon ad Can. Apoſt. 1.

hands

hands was uſed then; and why ſhould it not be now uſed, unleſs it be repealed? If there are not ſuch miraculous gifts which attend this now, it does not follow that becauſe they were ſometimes given by impoſition of hands, they were always given: as it was uſed for healing at ſome times, ſo for ordination of officers at other times. And the ceremony is, in itſelf, ſo ſimple and innocent, and at the ſame time ſo ſignificant, that one would wonder any perſon ſhould be ſo angry with it, when we have ſo plain precedents for it in the primitive church. And this law has never been altered or repealed, that we read of in the holy ſcripture; and therefore may very well be uſed.

Tho miraculous gifts ſometimes attended baptiſm, we muſt not neglect that ordinance becauſe they are not given now immediately upon it: ſo there is no reaſon we ſhould throw off this ordinance of impoſition of hands, becauſe miraculous gifts do not attend it.

It ſignifies a bleſſing: not only a deſignation, to ſhew theſe are perſons appointed to an office, and to ſignify the approbation of thoſe elders who may be ſuppoſed to have a competent judgment to know when perſons are qualified; but beſides this it ſignifies a conſecration, or a devoting them to the ſervice of God; *the offering up the ſaints being well-pleaſing to God*, as was the offering up

up the converted *Gentiles* [1]. So when a miniſter is devoted to God on this occaſion, thoſe who aſſiſt, offer him up to God; and he offers up himſelf to God, to be devoted to him in ſuch a ſtation and relation to the church.

I think I have ſaid what is neceſſary to juſtify our manner of proceeding. I know there are other trifling objections; but I think I have obviated thoſe which ſeem to have the greateſt colour of reaſon. Nor need I farther inſiſt upon any thing in oppoſition to the vain fancy of thoſe who would have private members of a church to ordain, when there is not ſo much as one inſtance in ſcripture to juſtify ſuch a kind of ordination; and when their part is another thing, namely, to elect.

Now, my brethren, as we ſee the rule by which we ſhould go; it behoves us to advert thereunto. I have enlarged a little the more on the qualifications of perſons to be devoted to theſe offices, becauſe I was willing to take occaſion to ſhew them what duties are incumbent on them when they engage in ſuch ſervices. And I muſt particularly exhort my brother, who is choſen by this congregation to the office of a paſtor, to conſider the qualifications which, from the ſacred ſcriptures, I have ſet before him;

[1] Rom. 15. 16.

and

and frequently to read them, and learn from thence his great duty, that he may discharge it faithfully towards God and towards men.

You are to consider, my brother, that 'tis a special honour and dignity conferred upon you to be engaged in this so solemn and sacred a service: and whatsoever difficulties and burdens you may meet with in the way, all will be made up by the supply of divine grace, while you keep faithful to your duty. *The great shepherd and bishop of our souls* [m] will never leave us destitute of his mercy, while we perform the duties belonging to our charge as becomes us. You are *to be instant in season and out of season*; to *teach*, to *rebuke*, to *exhort*, and to *comfort with all long-suffering and doctrine* [n]: you are to *study*, in order to these, *to shew yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* [o]. You are to endeavour to preserve the church from corrupt doctrines, and improve the people under your instruction and care in *knowledge and understanding* [p]. You are to be *a pattern to the flock* [q], that they may learn from your behaviour, as well as preaching, how they ought to practise the duties of the christian religion. You are *to watch over their souls* [r]; to pray ear-

[m] 1 Pet. 2. 25.
[n] 2 Tim. 4. 2.
[o] 2 Tim. 2. 15.
[p] Jer. 3. 15.
[q] 1 Pet. 5. 3.
[r] Heb. 13. 17.

nestly

neſtly for them in private as well as in publick. You are, upon all proper occaſions, *to ſhew yourſelf ready to every good word and work.* You are to ſeek their increaſe in number, by the converſion of ſinners, in preaching the goſpel of Chriſt. And you are to ſeek their edification, their increaſe in knowledge and in grace. Thoſe qualifications I have mentioned, and many other paſſages of ſcripture, ſhew that this is your work and duty. You are *to give them their food in due ſeaſon* [r], and adminiſter the ordinances as occaſion offers itſelf. You are to exerciſe diſcipline amongſt them with meekneſs and humility; and yet *to magnify your office* [s], by doing what you do, in the name and authority of the Lord Jeſus: which ſhould make an impreſſion upon your own mind, by conſidering that *you muſt give an account* [t]; and an impreſſion on their minds, conſidering that your words, when according to the rule of Chriſt, will have their weight. *Whatſoever is* ſo *bound on earth, is bound in heaven; and whatſoever is* ſo *looſed on earth, is looſed in heaven* [u]. You are *to ſtudy to ſhew yourſelf approved* [v] after this manner.

And it may neceſſarily be inferred, that they alſo to whom you miniſter, muſt needs have duties incumbent upon them: the re-

[r] Mat. 24. 45.
[s] Rom. 11. 13.
[t] Heb. 13. 17.
[u] Mat. 18. 18.
[v] 2 Tim. 2. 15.

lation

lation they bear to their paſtor, ought to make them ſubmiſſive and humble: they ought to ſuffer the word of exhortation; to hear the word of God with reverence; to attend the miniſtry, which, according to the divine rule, is eſtabliſhed in the church of God: they ought to ſupport and maintain thoſe they call to that ſervice: the people ought to encourage them, and ſtand by them in a time of ſuffering and affliction, if that befal them for the ſake of Chriſt. They ought to perform various duties on their part, which I need not inſiſt on, becauſe it is a province which another has undertaken.

This ought to put us in mind, my brethren, who have been already conſtituted in this office, *to take heed to our miniſtry, that we alſo fulfil it* [w]. We ought to have the ſame ſentiments, with my brother, upon this occaſion. We may, perhaps, have cauſe to look back with ſorrow, that we have ſerved Chriſt no better, and no more *adorned the doctrine of our bleſſed Saviour* [x]; that we have preached, and no more recommended the word we preach, by a ſuitable pattern to the flock. We ſhould, upon this occaſion, revive in our minds thoſe ſentiments which we had when we were ſolemnly ordained; and take care, for time to come, to honour and ſerve our Lord

[w] Col. 4. 17. [x] Tit. 2. 10.

better,

better, that we may have a comfortable appearance before him at the laſt.

And this I would ſpeak for the encouragement of us all; that thoſe whom God has made us inſtruments to convert, *will be our crown, and joy, and glory in the day of the Lord* [y]: thoſe whom we have *turned from the error of their ways* [z]; thoſe whom we have reclaimed by a ſuitable reproof; thoſe whom we have comforted by good advice and tender inſtructions; thoſe whom we have led into the knowledge and love of the truth, and into a conſcientious diſcharge of the duties of religion, we ſhall have joy of them in the day of our Lord's appearance; when we ſhall be able to ſay, *Lord here am I, and the children whom thou haſt graciouſly given me* [a]. 'Tis true, we have ſo many defects and infirmities, that we could not ſtand before our Lord, were he not of infinite compaſſion and mercy: but *the chief ſhepherd of our ſouls* [b] will reward us according to his mercy, and forgive our infirmities, while we ſeek to ſerve and honour him.

And as for you, my brethren, who are choſen to the office of deacons; conſider that 'tis a good work, and they are honourable qualifications which are required in you.

[y] 1 Theſſ. 2. 19.
[z] James 5. 20.
[a] Gen. 33. 5.
[b] 1 Pet. 5. 4.

Your work is honourable, to be called miniſters in the church of Chriſt; for ſo the word *deacons* ſignifies: and our Lord Jeſus, who will take every kindneſs as done to him which is done to his poor, with what joy will he receive you; and with what joy will you be filled at laſt, when he ſhall ſay, *I was hungry, and ye fed me; thirſty, and ye gave me drink*[c]? &c. You will eſpecially have the comfort of thoſe words, becauſe 'tis your buſineſs to take care of the poor. Remember, when inconveniences and troubles ſhall meet you in the diſcharge of your office, that what you have done is done for Chriſt; and every thing that is done for a poor member of his body, is reckoned as done to himſelf. You are to uſe diſcretion and prudence; to ſeek to God for wiſdom, to be faithful in the diſcharge of your work: and ſo you will honour God, and walk regularly in the office preſcribed to you. Let me therefore exhort you to undertake it with willingneſs and chearfulneſs; for tho there is labour and care in it, yet being done for our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, *when the great ſhepherd and biſhop of our ſouls ſhall appear*, you alſo will have your reward.

[c] Mat. 25. 35.

SERMON IV.

Preach'd at

SPITTLE-FIELDS, June 16, 1700.

1 COR. i. 23, 24.

But we preach Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and unto the Greeks fooliſhneſs; but unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt, the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.

The firſt SERMON on this text.

AS the power and wiſdom of God are very conſpicuous in the works of creation and providence; ſo they eaſily and deeply impreſs the minds of thoſe who but moderately attend to them. Even a tranſient view of the divine works, in the formation and government of the world, will engage men to acknowledge that God is *wonderful in counſel, and excellent in working* [c]. And

[c] Iſa. 28. 29.

it

it ſeems reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that if he diſcovers himſelf in any extraordinary diſpenſation, if he *brings to paſs any new thing in the earth* [d], eſpecially if he erects a government and kingdom which ſhall be term'd *a new creation, new heavens, and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteouſneſs* [e]; it might ſeem reaſonable, I ſay, to expect the ſame characters of *power* and *wiſdom* in a work of this kind. Therefore thus far the *Jews* and the *Greeks*, i. e. the Jews and Gentiles, were in the right to inquire whether theſe characters were to be found in the things which the apoſtles delivered, the doctrine which they preached, and the ſpiritual kingdom which they pretended to erect in the world. But they were to blame, that they did not attend with that care and diligence which became them to inform themſelves of this matter; for if they had, there's no queſtion to be made but they might have been eaſily ſatisfied that theſe marks were to be found upon the diſpenſation of the goſpel by our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. But taking only a ſuperficial view of matters, it ſeem'd to them very unlikely that this great prince, who was ſpoken of, ſhould be *crucified in weakneſs* [f]; and this doctrine of the goſpel, which taught men ſelf-denial, and that *thro' much tribulation they muſt enter into the kingdom of God* [g], ſhould be wiſely

[d] Iſa. 42. 9.
[e] 2 Pet. 3. 13.
[f] 2 Cor. 13. 4.
[g] Acts 14. 22.

calculated to make its way in the world by gaining a multitude of proſelytes. They were ſhock'd therefore at this new doctrine concerning a crucified Saviour; and not being able to diſcover in it thoſe characters of *power* and *wiſdom*, which muſt be in any work that is becoming the great God, they concluded it was but weakneſs and folly. This is what the apoſtle declares in the words of our text: *We preach Chriſt crucified; to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs.*

Yet there were ſome who were more attentive and conſiderate, and took a narrower view of things; and they had quite other ſentiments concerning this doctrine than the generality either of Jews or Gentiles; thoſe that *were called:* theſe eſteemed this adminiſtration of grace by a crucified Redeemer, to contain abundance of wiſdom and power. Therefore the apoſtle adds; *but to them who are called, Chriſt, the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.*

As to the occaſion of his treating on this ſubject at the beginning of his epiſtle to the Corinthians; we are to conſider, that this church was planted by this apoſtle, as you will find in the 18th chapter of the Acts. His miniſtry at Corinth met with great oppoſition, but yet was very ſucceſsful: there were both Jews and Greeks who oppoſed the doctrine of the goſpel; and there were ſome of both who at length embraced it.

We read that *he reaſoned in the ſynagogue there every ſabbath, and perſuaded the Jews and the Greeks* [g]. And you will find afterwards the great oppoſition which was made againſt him. After the apoſtle had eſtabliſhed them in the doctrine of the goſpel, having reſided with them more than a year and a half, he writes this epiſtle to cure ſeveral diſorders which had happened amongſt them by the ambition of ſome falſe teachers, who endeavoured to magnify themſelves at the expence of this great apoſtle's credit, and repreſented him but as *fooliſh* and *weak* in compariſon of themſelves; as appears in both his epiſtles to the Corinthians, wherein he often, uſing their language, ſpeaks of his own *weakneſs* and *fooliſhneſs*, and takes occaſion to cenſure them for ſuch accuſations.

The apoſtle having told them, after his common ſalutation in the beginning of this epiſtle, that *he had heard there were differences amongſt them* [h]; he ſhews the great abſurdity of their falling into parties and factions, ſeeing they all profeſſed the name of Jeſus Chriſt; and how very abſurd it was in ſome of their teachers, who appeared to have been ambitious to gain proſelytes to themſelves, to be called by their own names: *one ſaying, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; and another, I am of Cephas; and another, I am of Chriſt* [i]. Not that theſe

[g] Acts 18. 4.
[h] 1 Cor. 1. 11.
[i] Ver. 12.

were the ſeveral heads named for the various parties amongſt them: but theſe falſe teachers called them by their own names, and the people called themſelves by the names of their teachers: which the apoſtle ſhews, in a figurative way of ſpeaking, was as abſurd as if one chriſtian ſhould ſay, I am of the party of Chriſt; and another, I am of the party of Paul; and another, I am of the party of Cephas; when the ſame common name of chriſtians was agreeable to them all.

Is Chriſt therefore divided? ſays the apoſtle; *were ye baptized in the name*, or into the name, *of Paul* [k]*?* Were you baptized into any other name than the name of Chriſt? were you the diſciples of any other than of Jeſus? As much as to ſay; "'Tis a ſhame "for you to call yourſelves by the name of "this and that, and the other perſon, who "pretends to be a miniſter of Chriſt; juſt "as the diſciples of the philoſophers were "denominated from the head of each ſect. "It is not only a diſgrace to you to take "upon you the name of the ſervant when "you bear that of the maſter, but has "a ſad tendency to ſtir up faction and "ſtrife amongſt you." The apoſtle takes occaſion from hence *to thank God that he had baptized but very few amongſt them* [l]; for as things fell out, he found it was beſt

[k] Ver. 13. | [l] Ver. 14, 15, 16.

it

it ſhould be ſo ordered by providence, that none might pretend he baptized in his own name, becauſe he had the honour to plant this church as a ſervant of Chriſt. He adds this reaſon why he baptized ſo few, becauſe he would not have it ſuppoſed he made proſelytes for himſelf, or for his own honour: for, ſays he, in the 17th verſe, *Chriſt ſent me not to baptize, but to preach the goſpel*; that is, not ſo much to baptize as to preach the goſpel, which is my principal work.

Not with wiſdom of words, leſt the croſs of Chriſt ſhould be made of none effect. The apoſtle ſeems to have been traduced as if he was a perſon who wanted eloquence; and he lets them know there was no neceſſity of it for the publication of the goſpel: this he ſhews here and in the following chapter. " *Not with wiſdom of words:* i. e. " with that pompous eloquence, and that " affected manner of ſpeech which the phi- " loſophers uſed to perſuade their auditors: " *leſt the croſs of Chriſt ſhould be made of* " *none effect*; leſt any ſhould think we " gained diſciples rather by oratory than the " ſtrength of argument."

" *For the preaching of the croſs is to them* " *that periſh, fooliſhneſs*; *but unto us which* " *are ſaved, it is the power of God.* Thoſe " who deſtroy themſelves for lack of know- " ledge, for want of attending to the doc- " trine of the goſpel, they count it a fooliſh " ſyſtem, which is not worth their while

" to learn, and ſo go on ſecurely in the way " of perdition. *But unto us which are ſaved,* " *it is the power of God:* we have found it " to be the power of God by our own ex- " perience, and its influence upon our hearts, " as well as otherwiſe known the divine " power which has attended this doctrine."

For it is written, I will deſtroy the wiſdom of the wiſe, and will bring to nothing the underſtanding of the prudent [m]. This is foretold, ſays he, by the ſpirit of prophecy [n], that God will confound the wiſdom of thoſe who vainly conceit themſelves wiſe, thoſe great philoſophers who pretend to ſhew the people the way to happineſs; and it will be found that their methods and ſchemes are ineffectual.

Where is the wiſe [o] *?* that is, where is the philoſopher, the wiſe man among the Greeks? *Where is the ſcribe?* that is, the wiſe and learned doctor among the Jews. Where is the philoſopher who pretends to underſtand the nature of things ſo well? Where is the Rabbi, the doctor of the law, who pretends to underſtand the ſcriptures ſo well, and yet both deny the great and important truths of the goſpel? *Where is the diſputer of this world?* the caviller, who deals ſophiſtically, and makes ſo great appearance and ſhew of argument, when at the ſame time there is really no good ſenſe nor reaſon at the bottom of what he ſays? Theſe are

[m] 1 Cor. 1. 19.
[n] Iſa. 29. 14.
[o] Ver. 20.

terms

terms by which the apostle reflects severely upon those who conceited themselves so wise. *Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* that is, shewn the wise men of the world that they are foolish?

For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God; it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe [o]. Whereas they, with all their wisdom, have not been able to reclaim the people from idolatry, and have themselves fallen into gross errors, notwithstanding the evidence of the one only true God, which might be collected from the works of nature; while they have been ignorant of those principles, which are so easy to be found by inspecting the works of God in the creation of the world; it has pleased God, by a new institution, by teaching the doctrine of a crucified Jesus, to save them who believe.

For the Jews, says he, or since the Jews *require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified* [p]. The Jews were brought out of Egypt; their ancestors, I mean, were brought from thence by a mighty hand and stretched-out arm, and by various miracles, such kind of miracles as were very astonishing: and they require some such sign. Indeed our Saviour's testimony of himself, and his apostles testi-

[o] 1 Cor. 1. 21. | [p] Ver. 22.

mony of him, had been confirmed by ſufficient miracles; but the Jews required ſome extraordinary ſign, as fire from heaven, or a thundering voice, ſuch an appearance as was upon mount Sinai, ſomething which might ſhew great power and majeſty, and might ſtrike the minds of men with abundance of terror: and therefore becauſe the miracles of the goſpel were of another ſort, and becauſe our Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſuffered death himſelf upon the croſs, and did not ſave himſelf when he was called upon ſo to do; they were not contented with the evidence which was given of the truths of the goſpel: They *require a ſign. And the Greeks ſeek after wiſdom.* Reaſon and good ſenſe the Greeks pretended to ſeek after; and they were inquiſitive what ſpecious arguments would be produced for the proving of the doctrine of a crucified Saviour; not conſidering that this was not to be known by the light of nature, it being the *counſel of God which was hid from ages and generations* [q], and could never have been known but by his own revelation.

But we preach Chriſt crucified; unto the Jews a ſtumbling-block; that is, to the Jews who ſeek for a ſign. They ſtumble at the doctrine of the goſpel, becauſe not evidenced by ſuch a ſign as they themſelves would require. *And unto the Greeks fooliſhneſs*; be-

[q] Col. 1. 26.

cauſe

cauſe they think it can't be proved by any reaſons or arguments taken from the light of nature. *But*, ſays the apoſtle, *unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks*; that is, who are converted, *who are called to be ſaints*, as he expreſſes it in the beginning of this chapter, *both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt, the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.* The very thing which the Jews and Greeks, that is, the generality of them, can't find in the doctrine of the goſpel, even that is found by ſome few: the power and wiſdom of God appeared to them amidſt all this weakneſs and folly, which occaſioned the others to ſtumble.

Having given you this account of the occaſion of the words, I ſhall conſider theſe three parts in them.

I. The account which the apoſtle gives us of the manner of his preaching the goſpel: which muſt be taken to be the ſame with that of his fellow-labourers in the work of the miniſtry; and which, at the ſame time, informs all thoſe, who in ſucceeding ages are engaged in this ſervice, after what manner they are to preach, what is the doctrine they are to inſiſt on, namely, *Chriſt crucified. We preach Chriſt crucified.* This is the buſineſs, this is the employment of thoſe who miniſter the word,

word, to preach Chriſt as crucified for ſinners.

II. Here is an account of the prejudices of the generality of men to whom the goſpel is preached. The doctrine of a crucified Saviour is not well received by the generality of men; 'tis *to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs:* and there is no new thing under the ſun, but many at leaſt, of the ſame prejudices which ſhock'd the Jews and Greeks then, hinder others now from embracing the ſame goſpel.

III. Here is an account of the different entertainment of the goſpel by ſome few, both Jews and Gentiles. They had quite other ſentiments of it than the generality of mankind; it was to them *the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.* It appeared to them to have the ſame beauty and excellency which the others pretended was not to be found in it. And there is ſtill the ſame luſtre and glory upon it in various reſpects, as was in the primitive times: and therefore we juſtly account this doctrine of *Chriſt crucified*, that is, the ſcheme of the chriſtian religion, to contain in it abundance of the *wiſdom and power of God.*

I. I am to inſiſt on the buſineſs and employment of the apoſtles, and conſequently other

other ministers of the gospel; which is to preach Christ, and him crucified: *We preach Christ crucified.* 'Tis true, the apostle speaks of this in the following chapter as the design he took in hand, and the work he engaged in, when he first founded this church at Corinth: *For I determined*, says he, *not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*[r]. When he came to declare to them the testimony of God, he *determined not to know any thing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified:* and as this was the doctrine he had insisted on at first; so he declares, in the words of our text, 'twas the same doctrine he was still preaching, and was willing constantly to make the subject of his ministrations. But then in this doctrine of Jesus Christ as crucified, there are several parts to be considered.

1. That Jesus is the Christ: for this the apostles endeavoured to prove when they came first to plant the christian religion.

2. The doctrine of his crucifixion, with the necessary consequences and effects of it; that is, those other doctrines which depend upon the doctrine of the cross of Christ.

3. The offer and proposal of salvation both to Jews and Gentiles; to all who shall believe and entertain the gospel.

These are the three things which may be comprehended in these terms: for without

[r] 1 Cor. 2. 2.

believing

believing that *Jeſus is the Chriſt*, what would it ſignify for the apoſtle to declare that there was a certain perſon crucified at Jeruſalem? Without declaring the crucifixion of Chriſt, how was it poſſible for him to explain thoſe great doctrines which are required to be believed in order to our ſalvation? And without making the offer and propoſal of ſalvation to ſinners, to ſuch as ſhould believe the goſpel; how was it likely that the attention of any would be engaged to inquire into ſuch a doctrine as this is, a doctrine againſt which ſo many were prejudiced? But in that there is a kind offer of ſalvation, and in that the apoſtles explained the doctrine of Chriſt's crucifixion, in order to propoſe it as *a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation*[f]; there was what might reaſonably excite the attention of men to inquire into it: and this was the way to give ſuch ſatisfaction to the judgment of ſuch inquirers, as might induce them to embrace it.

1. The firſt propoſition then that is to be conſidered as contained in this doctrine of Chriſt crucified, is, that *Jeſus is the Chriſt*. I need not largely inſiſt on the proof of this, becauſe I ſuppoſe I am ſpeaking to thoſe who believe it; but it was neceſſary for the apoſtles to prove this, becauſe they ordinarily firſt addreſſed themſelves to the Jews, who were ſcattered in various Gentile cities:

[f] 1 Tim. i. 15.

and

and they would not have proceeded after a rational manner without convincing them firſt that Jeſus was the Meſſias; nor could they expect to be believed till they had proved this point plainly to them. 'Tis true, this, as well as other of the fundamental doctrines of chriſtianity, and thoſe of natural religion alſo, are, upon occaſion, fit to be diſcourſed of amongſt thoſe who believe them, for the confirmation and eſtabliſhment of their faith; and to preſerve them from the corrupt principles of thoſe who oppoſe them. But I deſign to treat on this only in the general, to give a repreſentation of the way which the apoſtles took to prove that Jeſus was the Meſſiah; that I may ſhew the method they took was reaſonable, and their arguments convincing, if they had been well conſidered. There were two ways then by which they proved this, that Jeſus was the Meſſiah: the one was by the prophecies of the old teſtament; and the other was by the miracles of the new.

To prove that Jeſus was the Chriſt, was to prove that he was that prophet ſpoken of in the old teſtament under ſo many glorious characters; who was deſcribed ſo many ways, and concerning whom ſo many marks were given, that he might be known and diſtinguiſhed from all other perſons whenever he came into the world. They proved therefore, by divine teſtimony, that Jeſus of Nazareth was the great perſon who was expected

expected by the Jews: for none can read the old teſtament but muſt find this perſon ſpoken of by various names and titles, which eminently diſtinguiſh him. There are abundance of things ſaid of him, both what he was to do, and what to ſuffer; what oppoſition he ſhould meet with, and what ſucceſs ſhould attend him: therefore the apoſtles acted very reaſonably when they opened the holy ſcriptures to the people, and alledged that *Jeſus was the Chriſt.*

Among other paſſages to this purpoſe, I ſhall cite but a few to ſhew you that this was the manner of the apoſtle Paul. As ſoon as he was converted, 'tis ſaid, in the 9th of the Acts, and 20th verſe; *And ſtraightway he preached Chriſt in the ſynagogues, that he is the Son of God.* And then in the 22d verſe: *And Saul increaſed the more in ſtrength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damaſcus, proving that this is very Chriſt*; that is, was the very Meſſiah propheſied of in the old teſtament. And when he preached the goſpel firſt among the Corinthians, where there was a ſynagogue of the Jews, of whom ſome were converted, and became a part of that church; we read, *When Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was preſſed in ſpirit, and teſtified to the Jews that Jeſus was Chriſt* [s]. This was when he was at Corinth. And he did the ſame thing

[s] Acts 18. 5.

before

before among the Theſſalonians; as you may ſee in the 17th chapter: *Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three ſabbath-days reaſoned with them out of the ſcriptures, opening and alleging that Chriſt muſt needs have ſuffered, and have riſen from the dead; and that this Jeſus whom I preach unto you, is Chriſt* [t]: this Jeſus of Nazareth, he is the Meſſiah, that *anointed one* who is ſpoken of by ſo many dignifying characters in the old teſtament.

Now the prophecy of the old teſtament was either expreſs, or by typical repreſentation: and in both theſe ways there was an account given of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt under the moſt clear and diſtinguiſhing marks and characters. The types were a ſort of prophecy; they prefigur'd the coming of the Lord Jeſus, and gave us an account of various things he was to do and ſuffer.

As for the expreſs prophecies of the old teſtament, they are very numerous. There is an account of his wonderful and miraculous birth, *that a virgin ſhould conceive a ſon* [u]; as the prophet Iſaiah declares. There is an account of the place where he ſhould be born, *that it ſhould be in Bethlehem* [v]. An account of the maſſacre of the infants there, on occaſion of his birth, repreſented by *Rachel weeping for her children* [w]. An account of his going into Egypt, and his re-

[t] Acts 17. 3.
[u] Iſa. 7. 14.
[v] Mich. 5. 2.
[w] Jer. 31. 15.

turn

turn from thence; *out of Egypt have I called my Son* [x]. An account of the manner of his preaching; *proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the priſon-doors to them that were bound* [y]. An account of the wonderful modeſty and meekneſs of his behaviour: altho he was by office a king, yet that he ſhould appear *meek and lowly, he ſhould not cry aloud, nor make his voice to be heard in the ſtreets* [z]; not make any great noiſe, or ſhew any kind of oſtentation; but, on the contrary, ſhould appear the moſt ſingular pattern of meekneſs and humility. As to many circumſtances of his life, the prophets give us paſſages which ſufficiently characterize him. But then as his crucifixion and ſufferings are ſo very conſiderable, that the apoſtle makes the whole chriſtian religion to center here, and ſhews that the preaching of the chriſtian religion is to preach Chriſt crucified; ſo all the particularities of his ſufferings are, in a manner, foretold by the prophets: that he who *ſat at table with him, ſhould lift up his heel againſt him* [a]: that both Jews and Gentiles ſhould perſecute him; *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth ſet themſelves, and the rulers take counſel together againſt the Lord, and againſt his anointed* [b]. That he ſhould be ſcoff'd at;

[x] Hoſ. 11. 1.
[y] Iſa. 61. 1.
[z] *Chap.* 42. 2.
[a] Pſal. 41. 9.
[b] Pſal. 2. 1, 2.

that

that he ſhould be buffetted; that he ſhould be expoſed to various torments, and at laſt be crucified: as is foretold by the prophet Iſaiah, in the 53d chapter of his prophecy; and by David in the 22d Pſalm. That he ſhould be ſcourg'd; *for by his ſtripes we muſt be healed:* that he ſhould be ſpit upon; for *he ſhould not hide his face from ſhame and ſpitting:* that he ſhould offer himſelf as a ſacrifice; *who was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, and broken for our ſins.* That he ſhould be lifted up and nailed to a croſs; as is repreſented by the pſalmiſt, when he ſpeaks of him as being rack'd, and his bones extended *that they ſtared upon him:* and when he ſpeaks of *his hands and feet being pierced, while they laughed him to ſcorn and ſhook the head at him; while they parted his garments amongſt them, and caſt lots on his veſture.* The ſame may be ſaid concerning his reſurrection, and his aſcenſion into heaven. Moſt things, in ſhort, which the apoſtles and evangeliſts have declared concerning him in the hiſtory they have given us of his life and death, as well as many things relating to the doctrines he preached, you will find ſpoken of in the prophetical part of the old teſtament.

Not only this, but there were various types which did eminently repreſent him: particularly that of the paſchal lamb; and the goat which was ſacrificed, and the ſcapegoat which was ſent into the wilderneſs on

the annual day of atonement. But it were endleſs for me to enumerate the many particulars wherein theſe, and other of thoſe ſacrifices which God inſtituted heretofore, typified the Meſſiah. The author to the Hebrews gives us an excellent account of this matter; and explains the ſenſe of the old teſtament at the ſame time that he confirms and proves the religion of the new.

Now when ſuch proofs as theſe were produced by the apoſtle, it was very reaſonable that the Jews, who believed the old teſtament to be the word of God, ſhould yield to ſuch arguments as theſe, ſeeing no perſon, but Jeſus Chriſt, had ever appeared in the world to whom all theſe characters anſwered; and ſeeing it was inconſiſtent with the deſign of God, in giving the word of prophecy in the old teſtament, to ſuffer any perſon to appear, to whom theſe characters ſhould agree, but the true Meſſiah: for if theſe things had met in any other, it would have betrayed the moſt conſiderate perſons into an unavoidable neceſſity of believing a falſhood.

And this, by the way, ſhews the unreaſonable obſtinacy of this people; and particularly that they ſhould ſtumble at the crucifixion of Chriſt, and be offended at the doctrine of the croſs, when there are ſo many expreſs prophecies which ſpeak of the ſufferings of the Meſſiah, which can't reaſonably be applied to any other: and when that cere-

ceremonial ſcheme, in which they are ſo well pleaſed, does but repreſent what our Lord Jeſus was to perform, and what he was to ſuffer. 'Tis, moreover, a remarkable providence that this people, who have denied Jeſus Chriſt notwithſtanding the reaſons which have been offered to engage them to believe in his name; that theſe harden'd people, I ſay, *upon whom wrath is come to the uttermoſt* [c], yet ſhould retain ſo much conſcience as to eſteem the old teſtament as the word of God, and ſhould ſo carefully and induſtriouſly keep the very book which condemns their obſtinacy and unbelief, and contains ſufficient arguments to prove Jeſus to be the Meſſiah, at the ſame time that it foretels they would ſtumble and be offended at him.

But then another ſort of argument which the apoſtles made uſe of to prove that Jeſus was the Chriſt, was taken from the miracles of the new teſtament. It may be ſuppoſed that the former argument was ſufficient; and one would have thought it might have been ſufficient to the Jews, who believed the old teſtament to be the word of God. But the Gentiles, who were unacquainted with the Jewiſh religion, could not be convinced of the truth of the goſpel this way, without firſt having it proved to them that the ſcriptures of the old teſtament were

[c] 1 Theſſ. 2. 16.

the word of God, and then being made acquainted with the various prophecies, and taught to compare them with the life and doctrine and ſufferings of the Meſſiah. And therefore for the planting of chriſtianity the more ſpeedily in the world, and likewiſe for leaving the Jews more inexcuſable, God was pleaſed to add to this teſtimony of his word the teſtimony of miracles; and to ſet that ſeal to the truths of the goſpel, and particularly to this, that Jeſus was the true Meſſiah.

Miracles were performed by Chriſt himſelf. When he came to teſtify of himſelf, God bare witneſs to him that he was his Son; that his doctrine was true; that he was indeed the Meſſiah, as he pretended, ſeeing he was able to do ſo many wonderful works, which could never have been effected but by the divine power. And the apoſtles performed miracles likewiſe, to confirm the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt; which they preached both to the Jews and Gentiles.

As to the miracles of our bleſſed Saviour; they were very many, and they were very great, tho they made not ſuch a pompous appearance as the Jews expected. They thought of a Meſſiah who ſhould come as a temporal prince, to deliver them from their enemies, to deſtroy thoſe enemies by fire from heaven; and to own the Jews to be his people in the excluſion of all others:

whereas our Lord comes meek and lowly; he comes into the world in a mean condition, and performs his miracles among thoſe poor and ignorant people who followed him, while the more eminent perſons among the Jews diſdained almoſt to inquire into the wonderful works he performed. Inſtead of deſtroying men, by miracle, in that way, he heals them; and raiſes ſome even from the dead. His miracles were, however, as great as if they had made a more magnificent appearance: for is not as great power neceſſary to raiſe one from the dead, as to cauſe fire to deſcend from heaven? Is there not as much power required to heal a perſon in a moment, whoſe nerves are contracted, and who has been impotent all his life-time and never been able to go; is not this, I ſay, as great an effect of power, as for a numerous army to be deſtroyed after a miraculous manner? or to be ſmitten by the hand of an angel in the night? Our Lord Jeſus performed many miracles, and thoſe in the ſight of abundance of people: four or five thouſand people are too many witneſſes to be called to behold a work of this kind, if it be not a true miracle. Did ever any impoſtor ſuppoſe that he could hide his art of legerdemain from the eyes of ſuch multitudes of people, who muſt needs have attended with great curioſity; eſpecially when he came to eſtabliſh a new doctrine amongſt them? As the miracles of our Lord were done in the

view of abundance of people; ſo the things that he did were ſuch of which men might receive an eaſy information by their ſenſes, whether they were true or not. When there was ſo ſmall a quantity of bread and fiſh, and ſo great a multitude to be fed, it was eaſily diſcernible, by the moſt ignorant perſons, whether this bread and this fiſh was multiplied. Theſe things every one could diſcern.

And the ſame may be ſaid concerning the miracles which the apoſtles wrought. Some of them were wrought before a great number of witneſſes: and of thoſe who oppoſed the chriſtian religion, ſome could not deny the facts; and others were ſo convinced as to own the truth of chriſtianity, which was confirmed by them. Nor is it to be ſuppoſed the goſpel ſhould have been likely to obtain in the world as it did, if the apoſtles had not had an extraordinary power from heaven to confirm what they ſaid. When therefore our Lord ſaid he was the Son of God, he performed miracles to prove it; and when the apoſtles taught the ſame doctrine, they healed the ſick, raiſed the dead, and performed miracles, that there might be no room for any one reaſonably to doubt. Nay, theſe miracles not only carried an inconteſtable evidence on the minds of thoſe in whoſe view they were performed; but the greateſt enemies of chriſtianity, in ages after the time of Chriſt and his apoſtles, have

have been forced to confeſs that many wonderful works were done by him and them. Tho they have denied the truths which they preached, yet they have acknowledged that many marvellous things were done by them. But it is ſufficient proof that that man ſpeaks from God who is able to confirm by miracles, as well as by prophecies, the truth he aſſerts: and this was done by the apoſtles, when they proved that Jeſus was the Chriſt.

2. They treated of his crucifixion, not only by giving an hiſtorical account of the ſufferings of our Lord Jeſus, but explaining the doctrines which are founded upon the death of the croſs. This was another part of their work; and indeed it was neceſſary to give an account of his ſufferings, to ſhew that when they were compared with the prophecies and types of the old teſtament, they were an evident proof that our Lord Jeſus was the true Chriſt. And, moreover, the extraordinary doctrines which were to be divulged to the world, as founded upon the croſs of Chriſt; I ſay, thoſe extraordinary doctrines which men had not heard of before, at leaſt ſo clearly explained to them; theſe could not be propoſed in a proper manner without giving an account of the hiſtory of the croſs. Beſides, there are ſo many things in the ſufferings of our Lord capable of exciting the affections of men, eſpecially when they conſider the de-

ſign and end of them, and what principle of kindneſs and compaſſion brought him from heaven to lay down his life in ſuch a manner for us; that theſe made up an extraordinary motive to engage men to embrace the goſpel.

I ſhall only give you an account in general of the hiſtorical part of the ſufferings of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. I ſay, in general: becauſe indeed all his ſufferings, thro' the whole courſe of his life, may be called his croſs; as that is a term uſed in ſcripture to expreſs a ſuffering ſtate. 'Tis the croſs of Chriſt we are to take up in conformity to him [d], when we expoſe ourſelves to any manner of ſuffering. Tho he was *a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief* [e], thro' the whole courſe of his life; the clouds grew thicker when he approached the time of his death. And 'tis this the apoſtles in a ſpecial manner inſiſted on. It was of great importance frequently to recommend his life to us as the moſt excellent pattern: but his death, in a ſpecial manner, gave occaſion to explain the great truths of the goſpel. The apoſtles, Peter and John, and Paul, when they addreſs themſelves to the Jews, with how much boldneſs do they repreſent to them the greatneſs of their crime, in *crucifying the Lord of life and glory* [f]? And in what ſevere terms do they deſcribe the

[d] Mark 8. 34.
[e] Iſa. 53. 3.
[f] Acts 2. 23, 24, 32. *ch.* 3. 15.

barbarity

barbarity of the fact; telling them, that *by* cruel and *wicked hands* they had murdered him? They preached therefore the doctrine of the cross, by representing to the people that Jesus of Nazareth, *sent of God, mighty in word and deed*, was pleased to expose himself to suffer a most ignominious and painful death. We may be sure they explained to them the several circumstances of his death, and the great aggravations of his sufferings; for we find that in their writings they speak to the same purpose: that a person so great should veil his deity; that he who was *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person* [g], should be a man in all things, sin only excepted; should have all things truly human, and be put into so low a condition; be born in so obscure a place, and live after so mean manner as to be obliged to the charity of some good women for his sustenance; and not have so kind a treatment in the world as the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field had: for the *foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay his head* [h].

To be sure they represented the greatness of his sufferings as well as the various circumstances of them. No doubt they described the sorrow and anguish of his mind when he was retired in the garden, as well as when

[g] Heb. 1. 3. | [h] Mat. 8. 20.

he

he became a public ſpectacle upon the croſs: that it ſhould pleaſe the Father to wound him, to bruiſe him, to put him to grief before his enemies apprehended him: that he ſhould be betrayed by one of his diſciples, abjured by another, and forſaken by the reſt. That he ſhould be perſecuted by thoſe who were under ſuch ſtrong obligations to reſpect and honour him, becauſe he had performed ſo many miracles among them; and becauſe he had firſt offered to them the terms of peace and reconciliation: that he ſhould *come to his own, and his own not receive him* [i], but reject him as if he had been an impoſtor. That he ſhould be accuſed of the higheſt crimes, as if he had been guilty of a treaſonable deſign againſt Ceſar: as if he had been an impoſtor, and went about to cheat men of their ſouls: as if he had been a blaſphemer, and ſo had deſerved the higheſt puniſhment imaginable. That he ſhould be accuſed by witneſſes ſuborned to that purpoſe. That he ſhould be apprehended like a malefactor in the night, with ſwords and ſtaves: that he ſhould be arraigned at the bar of the Jews and of the Gentiles: that he ſhould be condemned, tho the heathen governor was perſuaded he was an innocent man. That he ſhould ſuffer ſo much reproach and ignominy, when his regal dignity was mock'd and derided; and the rude

[i] John 1. 11.

ſoldiers

ſoldiers addreſſed themſelves to him as to a king only in ſcorn, having clothed him with a purple robe, and crowned him with thorns, and put a reed into his hand inſtead of a ſceptre. That he ſhould be expoſed to the moſt ignominious death, that of the croſs, the death of common malefactors, thoſe who had been guilty of the higheſt crimes, the death of ſlaves, a death to which freemen were not expoſed. That he ſhould ſuffer that death, which was reckoned not only the moſt ſhameful, but accurſed. That he ſhould endure ſo much pain and torment in the various parts of his body, and particularly in thoſe parts which were moſt nervous, his hands, and his feet. That he ſhould be ſo long in dying, die a lingring death, loaded with ſo many ſorrows and afflictions; and amidſt his agonies behold the people mocking him, ſhaking their heads, and moving their lips in a diſdainful manner, tho he was ſuffering for their offences, and praying for their forgiveneſs, and ſhedding his blood to purge thoſe conſciences which were polluted by ſpilling it.

Thus the apoſtles, we may ſuppoſe, preached the doctrine of the croſs, repreſenting the hiſtory of our Saviour's ſufferings, with the various aggravations which attended them; the torments of his body, and the ſorrows of his mind. But I propoſed to treat of this only in the general.

They

They alſo repreſented what were the doctrines founded upon the crucifixion of our Saviour, and which had a relation to it. 'Tis very evident, that the chief intention of the ſufferings of our Lord was to make atonement for ſin: *Behold the Lamb of God*, ſays John the baptiſt, *who taketh away the ſin of the world* [k]. Tho his death was very exemplary, and tho we are exhorted to follow his example, and to be conformed to him ſo far as to be crucified with him, to die to ſin, and to exerciſe faith and patience, meekneſs and reſignation under the greateſt ſufferings, as he did; yet the great deſign of his death was *to make himſelf an offering for our ſins* [l], *to bear our ſins in his own body on the tree, that by his ſtripes we might be healed* [m]. This is abundantly evident from the manner the apoſtles took in expreſſing their ſenſe of the ſufferings of Chriſt in their epiſtles, as well as by the account we have of their preaching in the hiſtory of the Acts.

With relation therefore to Chriſt's crucifixion; they ſpake of his perſon as the Son of God: ſo the author to the Hebrews ſhews us the efficacy of his ſacrifice, becauſe he was ſo great a perſon, whom the angels are required to worſhip, and who *made the worlds* [n]. They took occaſion, in explaining his crucifixion, to ſhew the greatneſs of the divine grace and love, the principle from

[k] John 1. 29.
[l] Iſa. 53. 10.
[m] 1 Pet. 2. 24.
[n] Heb. 1.

whence

whence all this flowed; that *God did not ſpare his Son* [o], but gave him to die for us: the love of Chriſt, in that he did not ſpare himſelf, nor refuſe to make himſelf an oblation for our ſins, but voluntarily offered himſelf to the death of the croſs. They explained to them the nature of this ſacrifice, both with regard to the ſatisfaction made by it for ſin, and the appeaſing the divine wrath, that we ſhould be ſaved from everlaſting miſery; and alſo in its being meritorious, to procure for us the favour of God, ſo that we ſhould be enrich'd with the privilege of grace here, and the glory which is to be revealed hereafter. They explained from hence the neceſſity of repealing the legal inſtitution of the old teſtament, I mean the ceremonial part of that inſtitution; becauſe Chriſt, *by one offering, hath for ever perfected them that are ſanctified* [p]: for, as the author to the Hebrews well argues, there was *no need of another ſacrifice, when once a perfect one was come* [q]. From hence the apoſtles took occaſion to explain alſo the neceſſity of Chriſt's reſurrection, ſeeing he had made atonement for our ſins by ſo excellent a ſacrifice; the bands of death were not capable of holding him; therefore he was raiſed from the dead, and appeared to many of his diſciples: which was, by the way, another great confirmation of the truth of the chriſtian religion.

[o] Rom. 8. 32.
[p] Heb. 10. 14.
[q] *Chap.* 9.

As

As he died for our offences, ſo they ſhewed the people *he was raiſed again for our juſtification* [r]. His aſcenſion likewiſe was ſhewn from hence; for what ſhould hinder his being an interceſſor, after having offered a perfect ſacrifice? And the conſequence hereof was the bleſſing of the people, which was another part of the prieſtly office; and our Lord poured forth the ſpirit *to bleſs the people, by turning them from their iniquities* [s]: by which again he confirmed the truth of his holy religion. For that miraculous appearance of cloven tongues of fire, which ſat upon the apoſtles, and the miraculous gift of tongues which was continued ſome time amongſt them, and amongſt many of thoſe who were brought over to the chriſtian inſtitution; theſe, as they depended upon our Lord's crucifixion, ſo were a confirmation of the acceptation of his ſacrifice, ſeeing he was admitted into heaven, and theſe great and glorious events followed. They explained from hence the neceſſity of his coming again to judgment; for God had promiſed, that *if he ſhould make his ſoul an offering for ſin, he ſhould divide the ſpoil with the great and with the ſtrong* [t], and that he ſhould be the judge of the world: for there are various prophecies which ſpeak of his kingdom as an everlaſting kingdom; and therefore he muſt give the final and deciſive judg-

[r] Rom. 4. 25.
[s] Acts 3. 26.
[t] Iſa. 53. 12.

ment

ment at the laſt. This was to be argued likewiſe from the ſucceſs of his prieſthood, as well as from the dignity of his perſon: and ſo the author to the Hebrews reaſons; and having proved Chriſt a prieſt, ſhews him a king, and therefore *a prieſt after the order of Melchizedek* [t], who was both a king and a prieſt.

So that all the doctrines of our holy religion have a near connection with this of Chriſt's crucifixion; as I might explain to you, if I went into many particulars. And not only ſo, but the moral part of chriſtianity alſo depends hereupon: for we have not only an example of the exerciſe of the greateſt virtues in the ſufferings of our bleſſed Saviour, who ſuffered with ſo much meekneſs and patience and reſignation, and who believed ſo firmly at a time when he was deſerted in ſome ſenſe, and therefore cried out, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me* [u]? but this doctrine of the crucifixion of our Saviour ſhews us alſo the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin; ſhews us how God is diſpleaſed with it, that his own Son muſt be ſacrificed rather than ſin muſt go unpuniſhed; as well as gives the greateſt example of the divine love, and ſets before us the moſt excellent motive to engage us to a becoming obedience; that rather than we ſhould periſh for ever, he would be at the expence of

[t] Heb. 7. 17. | [u] Mat. 27. 46.

the

the blood of his only begotten Son. And in like manner there is a wonderful encouragement given to attempt the practice of virtue and holineſs, notwithſtanding that reluctancy which we naturally find in ourſelves, and the many attempts which have been made to no purpoſe by us; in that this doctrine directs us to ſeek to *the author and finiſher of our faith* [v], for all grace neceſſary to enable us to mortify the deeds of the body. He has merited that grace which can give a ſtrange and ſurprizing turn to our ſouls; which can *turn us from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God* [w]: beſides that our Saviour has given us, by his own words, and by his apoſtles, the moſt extraordinary and exact ſcheme of morality and holineſs, and has laid his own charge upon us, that we ſhould make ourſelves known to be his diſciples by doing his commands [x]; and to be his friends by conforming ourſelves to his will [y].

Thus did the apoſtles *preach Jeſus Chriſt* as *crucified*; and thereupon explain'd all the doctrines of religion, and preſs'd and inculcated the duties of it. And not only the moral duties, but thoſe of a poſitive nature have a dependance upon the croſs of Chriſt: for what does our baptiſm ſignify but our *burial with Chriſt*, and our *reſurrection with him* in a moral ſenſe, as well

[v] Heb. 12. 2.
[w] Acts 26. 18.
[x] John 15. 8, 9, 10.
[y] Ver. 14.

as

as it repreſents our Saviour's burial and reſurrection, which ſuppoſes his death? And it is alſo eaſy to obſerve, that the Lord's ſupper very expreſly ſets before us Jeſus Chriſt crucified. But,

3. Another thing to be conſidered in the apoſtles preaching, and that wherein all the miniſters of the goſpel are to imitate them, is, the offer and propoſal of ſalvation to all who ſhall believe and entertain it. They are to declare to men that theſe truths are to be believed: that *Jeſus is the Chriſt*, and that he has ſuffered for ſinners; that he who was crucified is become lord and king, being raiſed from the dead and aſcended into heaven; and that whoever believeth in his name, ſhall have everlaſting life. This faith indeed does not conſiſt only in believing thoſe propoſitions which I have mentioned, that Jeſus is the Meſſiah, that he was crucified, that ſuch doctrines founded upon his croſs are true, and that he offers ſalvation to ſinners: but we are to accept of this offer and propoſal which is made in his word; elſe we cannot, in the ſenſe of the holy ſcripture, be ſaid to believe in his name. And therefore faith is explained frequently by obedience, for it comprehends that in it. To *believe*, and *obey the goſpel*, are ſpoken of as terms of like importance. *To believe the goſpel* [z], is an act of obedience; for this is the will of God,

[z] 2 Theſſ. 1. 8. 1 Pet. 4. 17.

and *this his commandment, that we ſhould believe in the name of his Son* [a]. So that to believe in Jeſus Chriſt as the Meſſiah, as the Mediator, is not only to believe the truths which are revealed in his ſacred word, of which we may be convinced by ſuch teſtimonies as have been mentioned; but to reſign up ourſelves to his conduct, to be his diſciples, his followers; to imitate his example, and to conform ourſelves to his precepts; to be like him, ſo as to be *crucified with Chriſt*, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, in *dying to ſin, and walking in newneſs of life* [b]; to own him as our Lord and king, and ſubject ourſelves to his conduct and government; to be willing to do what he requires to be done by us, and to ſuffer whatſoever his providence ſhall expoſe us to, for the ſake of truth and righteouſneſs. And whoever thus effectually *believes in the Son of God*, and believes the foundation truths of the chriſtian religion, the croſs of Chriſt, the deſign of his ſufferings, and the great points which are founded thereupon; whoſoever heartily believes theſe, ſo as to comply with the terms which are laid down in the ſacred word, ſhall, as certainly as God is true, be ſaved: for there is the word of God, and his oath to aſſure ſuch of ſalvation; *two immutable things*, ſays the apoſtle to the Hebrews, *wherein it is impoſſible for God to lye* [c].

[a] 1 John 3. 23.
[b] Rom. 6. 2, 4.
[c] Heb. 6. 18.

Thus have I paſs'd thro' what I propoſed at this time, concerning the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt crucified. In giving you this ſummary account of it, you may eaſily take notice of the reaſonableneſs of believing that it is true; and, if it be true, of the importance of complying with the terms propoſed. And that application I leave you to make to your own ſouls; and the other part of our text to another opportunity.

SERMON V.

Preach'd at

SPITTLE-FIELDS, June 30, 1700.

1 COR. i. 23, 24.

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

The second SERMON on this text.

I PROCEED now to the second thing proposed from these words; which is,

II. To discourse of the prejudices which the generality of men entertained against this doctrine of Christ crucified. And here are named two sorts of people; Jews and Greeks, *i. e.* Jews and Gentiles: and their prejudices are represented to us in two words; it was *a stumbling-block to the Jews*,

Jews, and it was *fooliſhneſs to the Greeks*. The Jews diſtinguiſhed themſelves from the reſt of the world by calling the Gentiles in general Greeks; becauſe the Gentiles, who were moſt known to them, were Greeks. For in the time that the Grecian monarchy had the aſcendant in the world, the Jews were diſperſed into divers Greek cities; and therefore their converſation among the Greeks, made them call all Gentiles by their name. As the Greeks diſtinguiſhed themſelves from other men, by calling them Barbarians; ſo the Jews diſtinguiſhed themſelves from the Gentiles, by calling the Gentiles Greeks. The Greeks called all other nations Barbarians, becauſe learning flouriſhed moſt eminently amongſt themſelves; and the Jews called all Gentiles Greeks, becauſe the greateſt part of the Gentiles, with whom they had converſe, were Greeks. And thus we find, by the uſe of the word in the new teſtament, that it ſignifies Gentiles in general: *I am not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt*, ſays the apoſtle to the Romans, *for 'tis the power of God unto ſalvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Greek* [d].

As for the Jews, it may be thought ſtrange that they ſhould reject the doctrine of Chriſt crucified; that they ſhould oppoſe his perſon and his miniſtration; that he ſhould *come to his own, and yet his own ſhould not receive him* [e]. For they were perſons who made the

[d] Rom. 1. 16. | [e] John 1. 11.

moſt eminent profeſſion of religion of any people in the world; and they had the greateſt privileges and advantages for that purpoſe. They had been long expecting the Meſſiah; they had many prophecies which deſcribed him, and many types which prefigured him; they pretended to wait for *the conſolation of Iſrael*, to long for his coming: and yet theſe rejected him, theſe ſtumbled at him when he came. Our Saviour appeared amongſt them, and they were capable of making the moſt ſtrict and accurate examination of his doctrine, and of his miracles; they could hear him preach, and they could ſee the miracles which he wrought, and inquire particularly concerning ſuch as were done by his diſciples; and yet theſe people ſtumbled at him.

Then as for the Greeks, they were the moſt polite people amongſt the Gentiles; and if they rejected him, what appearance was there that ever his doctrine ſhould obtain in the world? The Greeks were an underſtanding people, and had advanced learning to a very great height at this time, when the doctrine of the croſs was firſt preached. It was the moſt polite age that ever had been in the world; arts and ſciences were improved very much; philoſophy was in great reputation and eſteem; and there were abundance of the Greeks who made it their buſineſs to be continually hammering out truth, as they thought, by diſputations and ſubtle

ſubtle inquiries. Divers of their philoſophers had great numbers of diſciples who followed them; and ſo natural reaſon was improved and advanced conſiderably. The Greeks had other advantages: for, by the converſation of ſo many Jews amongſt them, as you find there were Jews in all the Greek cities which had their ſynagogues; I ſay, the Greeks had a great advantage, by that means, to inform themſelves of what the ſcriptures of the old teſtament had ſaid, and to compare this with the doctrine, with the life, with the death, and with the miracles of the Meſſiah: beſides, having had the ſcriptures of the old teſtament tranſlated into Greek before this time, they had in this a much greater advantage, by having an eaſy acceſs to the oracles of God. And yet theſe people, with all their wiſdom and reaſon, with all their advantages of one kind and another, rejected the goſpel, deſpiſed it, laughed at it, and counted it fooliſhneſs: it was *a ſtumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs.*

But let us conſider the difference that is here made betwixt their prejudices: 'tis ſaid to have been *a ſtumbling-block to the Jews,* but *fooliſhneſs to the Greeks.*

A ſtumbling-block to the Jews. This term is taken from the 8th chapter of the prophecy of Iſaiah, wherein is repreſented the ſad condition of that people by reaſon of their oppoſing the goſpel. At the 13th verſe,

says the prophet, *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.* Ver. 14. *And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin, and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* Ver. 15. *And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.* Christ, who is represented as the *foundation* and *corner-stone* of his church, upon whose person and doctrine they and their faith are built, is a *stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence* to those who oppose the doctrine of his cross; and so he proved to the Jews. This metaphorical term seems to represent them as being in the way of truth. *What advantage hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God*[f]: theirs was *the covenant, the fathers,* and *the promises.* As they were in expectation of the Messiah, and were most likely to embrace him when he came; he spends his life with them, and yet they stumble at him. They are stopp'd in their progress, notwithstanding the advance some of them seem to have made, and the expectation they had of his coming, and of the improvement of religion thereby. They are stopp'd in their progress; and not only so, but they fall: they *stumble and fall,*

[f] Rom. 3. 1, 2.

and

and are ſnared and taken; as the prophet ſays. They are ſo offended at him, and treat him after ſuch a manner, that not only do they ſtumble at Chriſt, and ſo fall deſperately; but he declares, that as he was a ſtumbling-ſtone to them, by reaſon of their prejudices againſt him, that *ſtone would fall upon them and grind them to powder* [z]. As they deſpiſed him, and were offended at him; ſo he would execute his judgments upon them.

But what was it they ſtumbled at in a particular manner?

Why, they ſtumbled at the goſpel, becauſe it wanted *power*, as they ſuppoſed. This is evident from the context, as well as from the text itſelf: ſays the text, *Chriſt, the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.* Tho the Greeks count it fooliſhneſs, 'tis *the wiſdom of God*; and tho the Jews ſtumble at it, 'tis *the power of God.* So *ver.* 25. *The fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than men*; *and the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than men.* What in religion men count *fooliſhneſs* and *weakneſs*, is *power* and *wiſdom*: and this power ſurpaſſes all theirs, notwithſtanding what they ſuppoſe; and this wiſdom ſurpaſſes theirs, tho they are pleaſed to call it fooliſhneſs. Now they meant by *power*, authority, reputation, wealth, pomp and magnificence: all thoſe things which make a great appear-

[z] Mat. 21. 44.

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ance of power amongſt men, and advance any thing in the view of the world. For riches and honour furniſh men with power, and make them capable of doing much more than they otherwiſe could in human ſocieties. They, therefore, the Jews, ſtumbled at the goſpel, becauſe it did not appear attended with that pomp and ſplendor, with that external glory, and ſupported with human authority; becauſe the great and the noble, the wiſe and the rich, did not entertain it. And this is evident from what the apoſtle ſpeaks afterwards in the 26th verſe: *For ye ſee your calling, brethren, how that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.* Ver. 27. *But God hath choſen the fooliſh things of the world to confound the wiſe; and God hath choſen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.* Ver. 28. *And baſe things, and things which are deſpiſed, hath God choſen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.* Ver. 29. *That no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence.*

Now here we may inquire, in what reſpects they thought this doctrine of the goſpel, by the miniſtry of our Lord and his apoſtles, wanted *power*. And this will appear by ſhewing what power they expected and deſired; and then, that the doctrine of the croſs ſeem'd to want this great advantage, which would have been likely to make it gain reputation amongſt men.

You

You may eaſily know what ſort of power it was which they deſired, when you conſider,

1. That they were a people, eſtabliſh'd as a church, by wonderful ſigns and miracles, *by a mighty hand and out-ſtretched arm.* God brought them out of Egypt after many terrible plagues were executed upon the Egyptians: the ſea parted for them, and then returned upon their enemies; and *there was a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night,* to conduct them thro' the wilderneſs. God was pleaſed to manifeſt himſelf to them, after a moſt awful manner, upon mount Sinai, with thunder and lightning, and the voice of a trumpet; an audible voice from heaven pronouncing the law of the ten commandments. They were fed forty years with manna in the wilderneſs, and they were ſupplied with water out of the rock after a miraculous manner. They were introduced into Canaan with great ſigns and atteſtations of the divine power; and, upon various occaſions, in the times of the prophets, miracles were renewed amongſt them: fire came down from heaven to deſtroy thoſe who went to take the prophet Elijah [h]: an angel ſlew an hundred fourſcore and five thouſand who were beſieging Jeruſalem, all in one night [i]. Divers ſuch things as theſe had been wrought amongſt them: therefore they expected that

[h] 2 Kings 1. [i] *Chap.* 19. 35.

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in the days of the Meſſiah they ſhould ſee ſuch kind of miracles as theſe were, perhaps miracles which would make a more magnificent and glorious appearance than theſe: but, however, ſuch a kind of miracles they waited for.

2. The *power* which they expected in the time of the Meſſiah, was agreeable to thoſe external promiſes of temporal bleſſings God gave them under that lower diſpenſation of the old teſtament. Spiritual bleſſings were couched indeed under temporal promiſes: but the Jews, in a ſpecial manner, and almoſt only, look'd after temporal things; to be delivered from the hands of their enemies; to become victorious over them; to be ſecure from their incroachments; *to be the head, and not the tail*; to lend to other nations, and not to borrow of them; to have *five of them to chaſe an hundred, and an hundred to put ten thouſand to flight* [k]. Theſe were the promiſes which were propoſed to them for their obedience to God; and they expected in the days of the Meſſiah they ſhould be the moſt proſperous and victorious people in the world. So they interpreted that text; *The morning comes, and alſo the night* [l]. "In the morning of the Meſſiah it "will be a bright and a glorious day to us "Jews, but a gloomy night upon the reſt of "the inhabitants of the world." They hoped

[k] Lev. 26. 8. Deut. 28. | [l] Iſa. 21. 12.

to

to be a nation of princes, kings, and priests. In regard of temporal grandeur and majesty, their expectations were very great; and therefore you may easily imagine they objected against the gospel for want of this power.

3. They had many prophecies concerning the Messiah, which, under the covert of great temporal advantages, speak of spiritual blessings; or else had reference unto that glorious state of the church which is to be expected at the appearance of our Lord, when he comes *the second time without sin unto salvation* [m]: therefore overlooking the coming of the Messiah the first time, when he was to appear in a mean and despicable condition, in order to be a sacrifice for sin; and having their fancies full of those glorious descriptions which are in the old testament concerning the prosperity and victory of our Lord Jesus Christ; they were wonderfully disappointed to find one pretend to be the Messiah, who lived in such poor and low circumstances, and told them he must undergo the death of the cross. These three things shew us what a sort of power it was they expected.

But then let us, in the next place, consider particularly what it was they were prejudiced against in this account concerning our blessed Saviour. And it was almost at every thing; at his person, at his followers, at his miracles, at his doctrine, and at his proposals.

[m] Heb. 9. 28.

They

They were prejudiced againſt his perſon, becauſe he did not appear to deſcend from parents who were in great circumſtances in the world; perſons of great honour and reputation, of great wealth and ſubſtance. They therefore object to him that he was *the carpenter's ſon*, and that his relations were a mean ſort of people. They were ſhock'd at the manner of his education; imagining that he could not be liberally educated, or be well bred, who deſcended of ſuch parents. What reputation, what power, what authority can be pretended to by ſuch a man as this, ſo born and ſo educated? They were prejudiced even againſt the place of his habitation, becauſe he dwelt at Nazareth; this being a deſpicable place, to a proverb: *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth* [n]?

They were prejudiced alſo at the people who followed him, and took them to be a very mob: *Have any of the rulers believed on him? But this ignorant people, who know not the law, are accurſed* [o]. They were prejudiced againſt his apoſtles; that he ſhould call thoſe to be neareſt him, who were perſons of ſo mean a condition, poor fiſhermen, who forſook their nets to follow him. Are theſe the princes, thought they, the princes who muſt be neareſt the perſon of the Meſſiah? And does he ſeem to appear accord-

[n] John 1. 46. | [o] *Chap.* 7. 48, 49.

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ing to the deſcription we have had of the Meſſiah, when he has ſuch mean followers as theſe are, perſons of no conſideration in the world, but poor, ignorant, illiterate people?

They were prejudiced againſt his miracles too, as if there was power wanting in them, becauſe he did not *make the ſun ſtand ſtill*, or *go back*; becauſe he did not cauſe violent ſtorms of hail to deſtroy their enemies; becauſe he did not bring the plagues of Egypt upon thoſe who had them under their yoke; and becauſe he did not call for *fire from heaven* to conſume thoſe who oppoſed his doctrine: therefore, ſay they, here's a defect of *power*; whereas wonderful things were done in the times of Moſes and the prophets.

They were prejudiced in like manner againſt the doctrine of his crucifixion. They could by no means underſtand what need there was for the Meſſiah to be crucified: and the very diſciples of our Lord Jeſus, as they were prone to deſire *that fire might come down from heaven* [p], and conſume their adverſaries; ſo they cry, *This be far from thee, Lord* [q], when he ſpeaks of *ſuffering*. They were ſo tinctur'd with the prejudices of the Jews, that they could not think it ſuitable to the grandeur of the Meſſias to expoſe himſelf to any ſort of death; much

[p] Luke 9. 54. | [q] Mat. 16. 22.

leſs

leſs to the ignominious death of the croſs. The Jews were likewiſe prejudiced againſt the doctrine of the croſs, in that they ſuppoſed our Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſo impotent that he could not *ſave himſelf* [r], and ſo imagined he could not ſave ſinners. How can the doctrine of the croſs ſave ſinners? how can they be ſaved by this man when he could not ſave himſelf?

They were prejudiced likewiſe againſt the propoſal of the terms of the goſpel, after the manner in which the apoſtles delivered it, according to our Saviour's commiſſion. As they thought it a mean and a weak thing for the Meſſiah to expoſe himſelf to be crucified; ſo they thought it unbecoming his greatneſs and dignity to ſend his goſpel to the Gentiles, and that they ſhould come into fellowſhip with the Jews; that they ſhould be *fellow-citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſhold of God* [t], and ſhould come in for equal privileges with them. This they thought intolerable: and therefore when the apoſtle ſpeaks of his call *to go to the Gentiles*, they have no more patience, but cry out, *Away with him; it is not fit that ſuch a man ſhould live* [s]. So much envy prevailed over their minds, that they could not endure to think any ſhould be the people of God but their nation; or at leaſt if any were entertained, they ſhould be ſuch as were proſe-

[r] Luke 23. 35.
[t] Eph. 2. 19.
[s] Acts 22, 22.

lyted

lyted to them by partaking of their ceremonies. They were therefore prejudiced againſt the doctrine of the goſpel; they thought it would rather become the grandeur of the Meſſiah to advance them than to publiſh ſalvation to the Gentiles. This was a ſort of levelling doctrine, they thought, which could not tend to their advantage: while the Gentiles were to have the goſpel publiſhed to them as well as the Jews, they forgot the importance of it to themſelves; and rather choſe to reject the bleſſings it propoſed to them, than that the poor Gentiles ſhould ſhare with them therein: ſo much were they preſs'd with the paſſion of envy. Thus did they accuſe the goſpel with want of power: there was in the doctrine of Chriſt crucified no glorious and reputable appearance, as they thought.

Laſtly, as the Jews ſtumbled at the extent of the propoſal of ſalvation to the Gentiles, ſo likewiſe at the manner of the propoſal; the very terms on which ſalvation was offered to ſinners, which are faith in Chriſt, and true repentance and holineſs.

Let us now conſider the Greeks, what it was they meant by *wiſdom*; what it was made them expect wiſdom in any doctrine which ſhould be propoſed to their acceptance; and in what reſpects they were prejudiced againſt the goſpel, ſuppoſing it to be defective on this account, that it wanted wiſdom. They counted it mere fooliſhneſs,

folly in the abſtract, a moſt ridiculous thing. What then was the wiſdom they made ſuch an account of?

Why, ſometimes by wiſdom is underſtood the knowledge of the truth, and reaſon of things: ſometimes is meant a practical improvement hereof in the courſe of life; and then 'tis called prudence: and ſometimes this prudence is concerned not only in the government of a man's own life, but in the laying of meaſures and projects for public advantage, and for the welfare of mankind.

The Greeks had mightily improved learning, as was obſerved before. Philoſophy was in great vogue and reputation amongſt them: and therefore they pretended to abundance of wiſdom in the firſt ſenſe, knowledge in the nature and reaſon of things; that they knew how to think, and how to judge; how to compare things amongſt themſelves, and how to infer from them after ſuch a manner as to avoid the errors which the generality of mankind fell into.

They likewiſe pretended to a great deal of prudence, to inſtruct men in the way of happineſs; to ſeek their own welfare and advantage, as every man naturally deſires: they gave ſchemes therefore of religion and morality, to ſhew men how to govern and conduct themſelves in order to be happy. And moral philoſophy was of great eſteem among them.

They exerciſed their prudence likewiſe in managing this deſign of gaining diſciples, and perſuading men to come into their way, by uſing a great many terms of art, much ſubtlety of reaſoning, and the pomp of eloquence. They had ſo far ſtudied human nature, as to underſtand that this was likely to give their doctrine a great reputation in the world. It was this ſort of wiſdom therefore which they expected and inquired after. And they had abundance of curioſity, as appears by the account we have of the apoſtle's coming to Athens; *every one was inquiring after ſome new thing*[t]: and ſo they were willing to hear the doctrine of the apoſtle, tho they preſently rejected it.

They were curious about ſome new ſcheme of religion; and when chriſtianity was propoſed to them, they expected ſomething which ſhould be managed very ſubtlely, with a ſpecious appearance of argument and reaſon, and with a magnificent ſhew of rhetorick: ſome extraordinary eloquence they expected in the apoſtle, whom they ſoon reproach'd as *a babbler*[u]. This was the wiſdom they inquired after; they wanted to be entertained with fine ſpeculations, and every thing to be proved only by the reaſon of things, and an appeal to be made to their underſtandings: and, ſo far as things could be beat out with mere dint of reaſon, they

[t] Acts 17. 21. | [u] Ver. 18.

would be willing to attend; but to tell them of the teſtimonies of the old teſtament, to bring the holy ſcripture to prove the doctrine of the Meſſiah, or to tell them of being ſaved by the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; to tell them of theſe things, ſeem'd fooliſh: it ſeem'd ridiculous to pretend that men could be made happy this way; whereas they thought it was the way to make them moſt miſerable. If you conſider the matter particularly, you will find theſe muſt needs have been their prejudices.

Tho the apoſtles ſpake as to rational creatures, and never pretended to impoſe any thing upon the world without proof; yet if men would ſeek proofs for the doctrine of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, it muſt be by firſt conſidering his perſon, whether he was the true Meſſias or not: or if the nature of the thing required it, they muſt be ſent to the teſtimonies of the old teſtament. Beſides, when the apoſtles diſcourſed to them concerning the future ſtate, the doctrine of ſalvation by the croſs of Chriſt; why, theſe are things which they had never heard of among their philoſophers; theſe were *things that eye had not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor had they entered into the heart of man* [v]; as the apoſtle ſays in the following chapter: and therefore they are deſpiſed as fooliſh and ridiculous things. As if a thing may not be proved to be true when God has revealed

[v] 1 Cor. 2. 9.

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it, and ſhewn us the truth of it by prophecy and by miracle: as if theſe were not to be believed as well as any notion which we may be convinced of by rational arguments, from the nature of the things we know.

Another thing which prejudiced them againſt the doctrine of Chriſt, was, becauſe they thought it a fooliſh ſcheme to lead men to happineſs. They thought there needed not a ſacrifice and a prieſt of ſuch dignity: they counted it fooliſh to imagine that God ſhould be made man, that he ſhould dwell amongſt us, and that he ſhould expoſe himſelf to the death of the croſs. They counted it a fooliſh project, to put men upon hopes of happineſs by the righteouſneſs and obedience of another: a fooliſh project, to give them the hopes of a reſurrection and rewards in another life, while it put them upon expoſing themſelves to all manner of reproach and perſecution in this. Their way of leading men to happineſs was to teach them ſo to govern and regulate their paſſions as to render themſelves agreeable to human ſociety; to have a regard to the health of their bodies, and preſerve themſelves temperate: and at the ſame time they allowed them to think as highly as they pleaſed of themſelves. The Stoics boaſted of their ſelf-ſufficiency, making this their honour, that they were as ſo many gods, able to command and govern themſelves, and to be happy in ſpite of all external attacks. And

they carried on this diſſimulation ſo far, that when they muſt needs have felt abundance of pain, they would not confeſs it to be an evil. The Epicureans placed happineſs in the enjoyment of a man's ſelf. The Platoniſts uſed many pompous words to expreſs their high ſpeculations; and entertained and amuſed their own minds, and thoſe of their diſciples, with abundance of ſubtle fancies. All of them, in general, accounted morality, and a man's governing himſelf, to be true happineſs. They had very obſcure notions of another world: and therefore for the apoſtles to talk of future rewards and puniſhments, and that they muſt expoſe themſelves here to pains and torments for the ſake of religion, upon the hopes of a future ſtate of glory; this they could by no means think was prudent. This was all fooliſhneſs: therefore they diſapproved of the ſcheme and project of the goſpel, and judg'd it very ill-contriv'd to make the truths which it propoſed obtain in the world. They thought if there was truth in the things themſelves, there was the moſt impolitick way imaginable made uſe of for the advancement of it. Theſe philoſophers had ſomething to entertain men withal; for they conformed themſelves to the humours of the times, to the ſuperſtition and idolatry of the ſeveral nations where they lived. Their buſineſs was to be complaiſant to the world, and to addreſs themſelves to mankind with excellency

of

of speech, and with great appearance of argument and subtlety of reason. They therefore obtained amongst persons of great rank and character in the world; and themselves were called *the princes of this world* [w]. They obtained mightily upon mankind by their eloquence, and by their pretended reason; so that many princes turned philosophers, so great a veneration had they for them. It was very likely therefore that what they proposed, with all these politick advantages, should prevail.

But what was the scheme of planting christianity in the world by the apostles? Instead of being attended with any of these arts and subtleties, in order to render it successful, it will not so much as allow men the indulgence of one darling vice; not so much as pride and revenge, which prevailed greatly among the philosophers. On the contrary, christianity exposed its converts to persecution for the sake of Christ; it declared that *every one who would be his disciple, must take up his cross and follow him* [x]. What was there in the doctrine of christianity which should make it take, when it proposed such strict morals, and so much humility withal, so much self-denial; and declared, that the followers of it must expect tribulation? The Greeks therefore thought this folly and madness, and despised and rejected it accordingly.

[w] 1 Cor. 2. 6. [x] Luke 14. 27.

Beſides, the perſons who were employed in this work, they thought were altogether uncapable to bring a thing of this nature about: a company of illiterate men to publiſh ſuch things; men without reputation, without wealth, and ſo unable to engage any in their intereſt: without force and authority; nay, who muſt expect all the powers of the world to be combined againſt them. *The preaching of Chriſt* therefore *was fooliſhneſs:* this they thought was to defeat their own purpoſe, and it was impoſſible to eſtabliſh ſuch a religion after ſuch a manner; without money, without arms, without reputation, without the authority of princes, without ſo much as the common people on their ſide: a religion which oppoſed all the darling corruptions which men are ſo willing to indulge; and which propoſed to its converts, at their firſt embracing it, that they muſt *take up their croſs and follow Chriſt:* this they thought an unlikely project to take in the world.

Having given you this account of the prejudices of the Jews and the Greeks againſt the chriſtian religion, I ſhall now briefly treat of the laſt thing; and ſhew you,

III. That *to thoſe who are called*, to thoſe few who entertained the doctrine of the goſpel, it appeared with quite another face; *it was* to them *the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.*

The

The prejudices of Jews and Greeks were not ſufficient to engage the minds of all perſons: ſome there were ſo attentive to the doctrines of the goſpel, ſome conſidered the nature of it ſo well, and the proofs of it appeared to them ſo ſtrong, and the doctrines ſo reaſonable, that they found themſelves diſpoſed to embrace it. Theſe are ſaid to have been called: *To thoſe who are called.*

Sometimes in the ſcripture thoſe are ſaid to be *called* to whom the doctrine of chriſtianity is publiſhed: *Many are called, but few choſen* [y]. *Many are called*; that is, have the goſpel publiſhed to them. Sometimes it ſignifies thoſe who have embraced the goſpel when publiſhed to them: *Thoſe*, ſays the apoſtle, *whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called* [z]. So here, *thoſe who are called*, that is, who have embraced the doctrine of the goſpel, who are called to the dignity of chriſtians, to the privileges and advantages of the ſtate of chriſtianity; who are called out of the world, effectually ſeparated from the world, and from amongſt men; thoſe who are truly converted, true chriſtians; to them the goſpel appears to be both *the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.*

It appears to be *the power of God*, notwithſtanding all the prejudices of the Jews: for they diſcern the ſame glory and dignity in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, however he appeared

[y] Mat. 20. 16. | [z] Rom. 8. 30.

meanly

meanly in the world: they conſider that he is no leſs God, in aſſuming human nature from a low and a mean family, than if he had taken it in the family of a prince; for all mankind are of the ſame mould, and human nature is in itſelf the ſame. They conſider that this is the way to advance the glory of God ſo much the more: and therefore, tho for a time our Saviour's power was obſcured, it was agreeable to the wiſdom of God it ſhould be ſo. So much the more did the power of God appear in his miniſtry, if he had not a liberal education: ſo much the more wonderful was it that he ſhould reaſon after ſo excellent a manner at twelve years of age in the temple; and that without human advantages he ſhould *grow* in ſuch a manner *in wiſdom*, as well as *in favour with God and man* [a].

If our Saviour's followers were mean and contemptible, does not *the excellency of the power appear the more to be of God* [b]? That the doctrine of the croſs of Chriſt ſhould prevail upon the moſt uncultivated ſort of men, publicans and ſinners; thoſe who, by a cuſtom of ſinning, had been habituated to it; that they ſhould be brought to the obedience of Chriſt, when the politer ſort of men, and thoſe who made a greater profeſſion of religion, remained obſtinate: did not the power of God hereby appear ſo much

[a] Luke 2. 52. | [b] 2 Cor. 4. 7.

the

the more? Did it not appear the more, in Chriſt's promoting his religion by ſuch men as his apoſtles, than if he had employed the greateſt princes upon earth to advance it? What reaſon then to be ſhock'd at the goſpel for wanting power, becauſe he called ſuch mean people to be his apoſtles? And was there not as much power in caſting out devils, and raiſing the dead; as much power exerted as formerly, in cauſing fire to come down from heaven, or in making the ſun ſtand ſtill, or in ſending armies of locuſts and flies to deſtroy a nation? Was there not as much power, and abundantly more mercy and grace hereby manifeſted to the world? And accordingly the wiſdom of God concurred with this power, in ordering it ſo that the miracles of our bleſſed Saviour ſhould be of ſuch a nature as to diſcover the deſign of his miſſion, and the grace of the goſpel, as well as to ſhew his mighty power. There was no want of power in our bleſſed Saviour, tho he was crucified in weakneſs. What a power over his own mind, that he could forgive his enemies while he was bleeding by their mercileſs hands? God is ſaid to be *great in power* [c], when his mercy is ſpoken of; as amongſt men, 'tis a ſign a man has a wonderful power over himſelf when he can paſs by reſentments, and ſhew kindneſs to thoſe who have injured him. And does not the power of God appear upon this ac-

[c] Nahum 1. 3.

count?

count? as Moſes ſays; *Let the power of my Lord now be great, in forgiving the ſin of his people* [d]. Did not the power of our Saviour appear likewiſe at his reſurrection, which was the conſequence of his crucifixion? He was *raiſed with power* [e]; *declared to be the Son of God with power, by his reſurrection from the dead* [f]. Did not his power appear in ordering the goſpel to be publiſhed to the world? He ſhew'd his authority in giving commiſſion; and his power over the ſouls of men in rendering it proſperous. With regard to his apoſtles and miniſters, *their weapons were mighty, thro' God, to pull down ſtrong holds* [g]; to diſpoſſeſs devils, and aboliſh idols; to cultivate the paſſions of men, and reduce them to the obedience of Chriſt. Tho they had no wealth, to engage people on their ſide; no reputation in this world; yet the doctrine they preached, and confirmed with ſo many miracles, was received by many: and the *durable riches* [h] they propoſed, and the honours of the other world, were ſo believed by multitudes of people, that they were willing to expoſe themſelves to the utmoſt perſecution upon this account. Did not the power of Chriſt appear ſo much the more, in that *this treaſure was in earthen veſſels* [i]? And that when his apoſtles expreſs'd their thoughts after a plain and fa-

[d] Num. 14. 17, 18.
[e] 2 Cor. 13. 4.
[f] Rom. 1. 4.
[g] 2 Cor. 10. 4.
[h] Prov. 8. 18.
[i] 2 Cor. 4. 7.

miliar

miliar manner, it ſhould prevail upon the minds of men above all the ſubtle reaſoning and pompous eloquence of the philoſophers? Here was *power* indeed; thoſe who were called not only ſaw a divine power accompanying the goſpel, but felt the power and efficacy thereof in changing their hearts, in *opening their eyes, and turning them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God* [k].

And as for the *wiſdom* of this divine diſpenſation, it appeared no leſs than *the power of God* to thoſe who were called, to thoſe who were unprejudiced. The ſpeculative points of religion, the divine truths which belong to the goſpel, they are above what can be found out by mens minds; we muſt be beholden to divine revelation for the diſcovery. But are theſe truths ever the leſs conſiderable on this account? Surely when God himſelf ſhews us the method and ſcheme of ſalvation, which he has contrived and propoſed for the recovery of fallen ſinners, we have reaſon to acknowledge his *wiſdom* as well as his *power*.

The *wiſdom of God* likewiſe appears eminently, as there is a harmony and connection betwixt all the principles of truth; as natural and revealed religion are connected together, and this revelation of grace is built upon natural religion, and ſuppoſes man crea-

[k] Acts 26. 18.

ted

ted to glorify God; created innocent and holy, and that he had deſerved puniſhment by his ſins: revealed religion, I ſay, being built upon this, and being connected with it, here is marvellous wiſdom, and no occaſion to charge it with folly.

As for the propoſal itſelf, 'tis wiſdom for perſons certainly to embrace the doctrine of the goſpel, tho they expoſe themſelves to all manner of temporal puniſhments: for this is undoubtedly a rational way of concluding that *it is better for a man to loſe the whole world than to loſe his ſoul; for what ſhall it profit a man to gain the world and loſe his own ſoul*[l]? It is a rational way of arguing, that the pleaſures of the mind are better than thoſe of ſenſe; that 'tis better to have the eſteem of God than honour and reputation amongſt men. 'Tis a rational thing, if we are ſaved by Chriſt, that we ſhould be formed according to his model; and that we ſhould be reſigned to the divine will, to do and ſuffer what he requires. So the apoſtle argues well in the chapter following the text: *We ſpeak wiſdom amongſt them that are perfect*[m]; or *perfect wiſdom*, as it might be rendered. *We ſpeak perfect wiſdom*[n]: all the wiſdom of their philoſophy is but imperfect; they are mightily out as to the way of ſalvation: they may diſcover that men are ſinners, but 'tis impoſſible they ſhould

[l] Mat. 16. 26.
[m] 1 Cor. 2. 6.
[n] Σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις.

know

know which way ſinners will be ſaved, but by revelation. It is wiſdom certainly to conſult the intereſt of our ſouls. 'Twas wiſdom in the primitive chriſtians to embrace the doctrine of the goſpel upon good evidence; and good evidence they had by prophecies and promiſes which went before, as well as by the reaſon of the things themſelves, and the harmony and connection which there is between them.

And then as to the ſcheme and method of making the goſpel flouriſh in the world by ſuch means; here is *the wiſdom of God* as well as his *power* manifeſt: *his thoughts are above the thoughts* of the wiſe men of this world, *and his ways above theirs.* There needs more wiſdom to contrive ſuch a ſcheme, as there needs more power to effect it. The wiſdom of God appears in this, that he would take ſuch a method that it might be known it was of God, that nothing leſs could give it ſucceſs than the mighty power of God. What did the philoſophers do? what impreſſions could their documents make upon the ſouls of men in compariſon of chriſtianity, which makes men *wiſe unto ſalvation* °; refines their reaſon, and ſubjugates their paſſions; teaches them how to govern themſelves in this world, and prepares them for a better ſtate? To which may be added, that chriſtianity makes diſciples in a little time.

° 2 Tim. 3. 15. Rom. 1. 16.

Perſons

Perſons were converted ſuddenly in the primitive times; they were *turned* on a ſudden *from darkneſs to light* [p]: whereas it was a long time before the philoſophers could form their diſciples to live according to the ſchemes and methods they propoſed.

Thus have I ſhewn you that there was no reaſon, if we take but this general view of the matter, for the Jews to object there was want of *power*, or the Greeks to object there was want of *wiſdom* in the doctrine of the goſpel. I ſhall now make a few brief reflections, and conclude.

1. What has been ſaid altogether, proves both the truth and excellency of chriſtianity, and therefore may ſerve to confirm our faith in it. The things which have been ſpoken of are not *cunningly deviſed fables* [q]; it is *the truth, as it is in Jeſus* [r], which is delivered in the holy ſcripture to us; the truth which God has ordered to be fairly propoſed to men upon the moſt reaſonable and advantageous terms. Theſe things, which are the ſubſtance of the goſpel, carry ſufficient evidence with them to all who will attentively conſider them. If then we have ſuch reaſon to be chriſtians, *let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering* [f]: let us ſeek more and more to inform and ſatisfy our minds, that we may be able to reſiſt gain-

[p] Acts 26. 18.
[q] 2 Pet. 1. 16.
[r] Eph. 4. 21.
[f] Heb. 10. 23.

ſayers,

ſayers, and may not be *ſhaken by every wind of doctrine*[s]; any ſubtle ſophiſtry wherewith we may be attack'd. Let us inform our minds, by meditating on the grounds of chriſtianity, that we may be always ready to defend the religion we profeſs; and be able to ſay, *we know in whom we have believed*[t], and upon what grounds we have built our faith.

2. From what has been ſaid it may well be inferred, that it becomes thoſe of us whoſe buſineſs it is to miniſter in ſacred things, to take heed that we follow the example of the apoſtle, that we *preach Chriſt crucified.* I do not mean by this, that we ſhould only preach upon the ſufferings of our Saviour; but that we ſhould preach Chriſt crucified in the large ſenſe which has been explained: that we ſhould, upon occaſion, inſiſt upon the grounds of chriſtianity, and inſtruct the people in theſe, that they may not be eaſily ſhaken: that we preach the doctrine of the croſs itſelf; and not only that, but the deſign of it for the ſalvation of ſinners: thoſe things which are neceſſarily ſuppoſed by it; as the fall of man, the introduction of ſin into the world, the incapacity we are in to ſave ourſelves; the doctrines which are conſequent upon it, as the reſurrection, aſcenſion, and interceſſion of our Saviour, and his coming the ſecond time

[s] Eph. 4. 14. [t] 2 Tim. 1. 12.

to diſpenſe rewards and puniſhments. This is *preaching Chriſt crucified:* I don't mean that we ſhould inſiſt only upon the doctrine of the croſs, or Chriſt's being ſubſtituted in our ſtead. The ſcheme laid down, ſhews that every part of our duty may be ſome way or other comprehended herein, or referred hereto: for this is the centre, and the other doctrines are ſo many lines which terminate in it. We are to *preach Chriſt crucified*, proving that he is the Meſſiah, and ſhewing what a perſon this was who ſuffered, *the only begotten Son of God.* And we cannot *preach Chriſt crucified*, without the conſideration of the excellency of his perſon. 'Tis not to ſet him only before men as an example, but as one ſubſtituted in our room, to make atonement for our ſins, to appeaſe the wrath of God. We do not *preach Chriſt crucified*, if we make our ſalvation to depend upon our own merit, if we will not *ſubmit to the righteouſneſs of God* [u], inſtead of appearing in our own righteouſneſs for our juſtification. 'Tis not to preach the doctrine of the croſs of Chriſt, if we don't preach obedience to our Lord Jeſus in like manner. We muſt teach the people the neceſſity of being *crucified with Chriſt*; that they muſt take his croſs upon their ſhoulder, and follow him after the manner he has preſcribed, if they will be his diſciples. 'Tis not *to preach the*

[u] Rom. 10. 3.

croſs

croſs of Chriſt, if we don't preach what is the duty of the people, and upon what terms they may be intereſted in his death. We can't preach the croſs, if we don't preach repentance and faith in his name: and, if we don't preach up holineſs, we ſhall be ſo far from preaching Chriſt, that we ſhall be enemies to him. 'Tis not *to preach the croſs* of our bleſſed Saviour, if we don't preach thoſe doctrines which are founded upon it, or neceſſarily ſuppoſed under it.

3. As it behoves us, who miniſter the word, to take heed how we preach; ſo it behoves you to *take heed how you hear* [v]. If we preach the truth, we ſhall be clear from the blood of all men: whoever fails of ſalvation, we ſhall give up our accounts to God with acceptance at the laſt. I don't doubt but it may be ſaid of many of you, *As we preach, ſo you have believed* [w]; that your lives are a teſtimony of the truth and ſincerity of your belief. But let us every one examine ourſelves, and conſider upon what grounds and principles we have believed; whether it be purely what we have imbibed in education, or whether we have ſatisfied ourſelves; whether we have been *crucified to the world* [x], and are *dead to ſin* [y]; whether we have accepted the terms of ſalvation as they are offered to us in the goſpel. Oh how happy for us, if it ſhall at laſt appear that

[v] Luke 8. 18.
[w] 2 Cor. 15. 11.
[x] Gal. 6. 14.
[y] Rom. 6. 2.

we have thus heard and embraced the joyful meſſage of ſalvation! But what a terrible conſternation will they be in, who have heard this goſpel but have not obeyed it! You know the dreadful inſtance of the Jews, who ſtumbled and fell, they were *broken, and ſnared, and taken* [z]; they having periſhed after the ſevereſt manner, as having ſinned againſt the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as well as againſt the divine law; as having reſiſted *the counſel of God againſt themſelves* [a], and rejected the only method of ſalvation. *Take heed*, I ſay again, *how you hear*, leſt you ſhould have *ſo much ſorer puniſhment* [b] than thoſe who are without the goſpel, by having deſpiſed and rejected it. *But I hope better things of you, and things that accompany ſalvation, tho I thus ſpeak* [c].

[z] Iſa. 8. 15.
[a] Luke 7. 30.
[b] Heb. 10. 29.
[c] *Chap.* 6. 9.

SER-

SERMON VI.

Preach'd at *PINNERS-HALL*, Auguſt 30, 1707.

HEBREWS vii. 25.

Wherefore he is able alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them.

The firſt SERMON on this text.

THE deſign of the author of this epiſtle being to ſet forth the excellency of the chriſtian religion, he, in a ſpecial manner, inſiſts to that purpoſe upon the character of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt as Mediator; but moſt of all upon that part of his mediatory office by which he offered ſacrifice, and made interceſſion. The prieſtly function is that which he celebrates in a particular manner, it being moſt to his purpoſe ſo to do; that he might ſhew by the change of the prieſthood that there was a change alſo of the law, and might confirm the chriſtian Hebrews in their belief of the truth of chriſ-

tianity. He is upon this argument in this chapter; and cites a paſſage out of the 110th pſalm, to ſhew the dignity of our Saviour's prieſthood above that of Aaron and his ſucceſſors: *The Lord hath ſworn, and will not repent, I have made thee a prieſt for ever after the order of Melchizedec* [d]. From whence the author of this epiſtle takes notice, that whereas *the prieſts under the law were made without an oath*, our bleſſed Saviour is not inveſted with this office but *by the oath of God*; and, conſequently, as God doth nothing in vain, ſo when the ſolemnity of an oath is uſed in eſtabliſhing Chriſt in his prieſtly office, it ſignifies there is a greater dignity belonging to him, as prieſt, than to the family of Aaron. *For thoſe prieſts were made without an oath, but this with an oath, by him that ſaid unto him, The Lord ſware, and will not repent, Thou art a prieſt for ever after the order of Melchizedec. By ſo much was Jeſus made a ſurety of a better teſtament* [e], or a *better covenant.* The excellency of this new covenant he deſcribes and illuſtrates from divers paſſages of the prophets in the following chapter. The apoſtle farther argues from the unity of our Saviour's prieſthood, that it exceeded that of Aaron: *And they truly were many prieſts, becauſe they were not ſuffered to continue by reaſon of death; but this man, becauſe he con-*

[d] Pſal. 110. 4. | [e] Heb. 7. 21, 22.

tinueth

tinueth ever, hath an unchangeable prieſthood [f]. They were many prieſts; for, as they were mortal, one ſucceeded another. He is ſpeaking here of the high prieſt: when the high prieſt died, another ſucceeded him of the ſame family; ſo that there was a multiplicity of prieſts, becauſe of their mortal ſtate. But our bleſſed Saviour is the only *high prieſt of our profeſſion* [g]: for, tho he died, he died in offering himſelf a ſacrifice; and, in dying, conquered death; for he was raiſed preſently after from the dead, and ſo abideth continually. And 'tis the ſame high prieſt who died upon the croſs, the *high prieſt of our profeſſion*, who ſoon after roſe and enter'd into heaven. As it was the act of the high prieſt to offer ſacrifice, and upon the day of atonement to go into the holy of holies, there to make interceſſion for the ſins of the people; ſo ſeeing our Saviour was capable of performing both thoſe acts, and the interval of his death was ſo ſhort that it did not hinder the other part of his office, his interceſſion; this man is ſaid to endure continually: *He continueth ever, and hath an unchangeable prieſthood* [h]. And ſo from the unity of this prieſthood in the perſon of our Saviour, we ſee the eternity and immutability of it. *He abideth for ever, and hath an unchangeable prieſthood,* upon the account which you have heard; conſidering,

[f] Ver. 23.
[g] Heb. 3. 1.
[h] *Chap.* 7. 24.

together with this dignity, the efficacy of his ſacrifice, and the prevalency of his interceſſion: for there is no room for the change of a prieſthood where the prieſthood is perfect, when the perſon is perfectly qualified for his work, and performs it after a perfect manner.

Now *the law*, and the prieſthood belonging to that ſtate, *did not bring any thing to perfection, but the bringing in of a better hope did* [i]. Their ſacrifices could not cleanſe from moral pollutions, *but the blood of Jeſus cleanſeth from all ſin* [k]. Their prieſts were obliged *to ſacrifice for their own ſins, as well as for the ſins of the people:* and if they could not purify their own conſciences, how much leſs could they purify the conſciences of others by their typical ſacrifices? But the high prieſt of our profeſſion having no ſin; as he fell a ſacrifice, ſo he could make atonement for ſin. As he was God as well as man, his ſacrifice was of infinite value, and this prieſt of infinite dignity. So that there is no room for a change, becauſe it brings all things to perfection.

Therefore the apoſtle infers from the perfection, the unity and immutability, and eternity of his prieſthood, that he is well accompliſhed to ſave all who come to him. *Wherefore he is able alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them.*

[i] Heb. 7. 19. | [k] 1 John 1. 7.

Wherefore

Wherefore he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt. Seeing the great high prieſt of our profeſſion is ſuch a perſon as I have deſcribed, *the Son of God*, the object of the worſhip of angels; ſeeing he is *a prieſt after the order of Melchizedec, after the power of an endleſs life*; ſeeing he is ſo perfect a perſon that he needs no aſſiſtance, *no ſucceſſor*; ſeeing he is made a prieſt *by the oath of God*, a prieſt who belongs to *an everlaſting covenant*; ſeeing he alone is fit for this province, and is a *king* as well as a *prieſt*, as Melchizedec was, he being of that order; ſeeing he is eternal and immutable, and ſo continues in his office; ſeeing things are thus, it may well be concluded, *he is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt that come unto God by him.*

So that theſe words are an inference from what the apoſtle had ſaid before: and the inference is indeed very juſt and equitable. For ſuch a prieſt muſt needs *be able to ſave* men *to the uttermoſt*; a prieſt ſo allied to God as to be his *Son*; a prieſt who is every way perfectly qualified to know our neceſſities, and to make proviſion for them; a prieſt capable of *bringing in everlaſting righteouſneſs* [1]; a prieſt who is himſelf a ſacrifice, as well as the prieſt who offers it; a prieſt who belongs to *an everlaſting covenant*; a prieſt who is ratified and confirmed in his office by the *oath of God*; a prieſt *who can have no ſucceſſor*, and

[1] Dan. 9. 24.

needs

needs none, and who *abides* and continues *for ever* [m]; who, as he once offered a complete ſacrifice, makes interceſſion by the prevailing plea of his own merit and righteouſneſs: ſuch a prieſt as this muſt needs be *able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come to God by him.*

And, to inculcate this the better, in the latter part of our text the apoſtle renders the ſame reaſon or argument in effect, from whence he had drawn the inference in the former part of it: *Seeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them.* This is a thing to be well conſidered, and duly inculcated on our minds; for from the eternity of his prieſthood, among other things, he infers that he is *capable of ſaving thoſe that come unto God by him.* To ſhew that he is able to ſave them, he not only repeats the argument, namely, that *he ever lives*, but explains the matter farther in ſhewing what his buſineſs is: *Now he ever lives at the right hand of God* [n]; he ever lives *to make interceſſion for thoſe that come unto God by him.*

So that here are two parts in general to be conſidered in theſe words. The one is the aſſertion of the apoſtle concerning our Saviour's ability *to ſave to the uttermoſt thoſe that come unto God by him: He is able alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God by him.* And the other is the proof of

[m] Heb. 7. 3. | [n] Heb. 8. 1.

this aſſertion, the argument upon which he founds it; which he had mentioned before, and here repeats: *Seeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them.*

Firſt, We are to conſider the aſſertion of the apoſtle concerning Jeſus Chriſt, under the character of our high prieſt; *He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt them that come unto God by him.* This aſſertion concerning the ability of our Saviour, will furniſh us with theſe ſeveral things particularly to be conſidered.

I. What this great benefit is, which our Lord Jeſus Chriſt procures and beſtows upon *them that come to God by him.* It is *ſalvation*, and *ſalvation to the uttermoſt.*

II. The capacity of our Saviour to beſtow this great benefit. The apoſtle aſſures us, *he is able to ſave us to the uttermoſt.*

III. The qualification of the perſons who may partake of this benefit: *They muſt come to God by him*; for the words are reſtrained to theſe perſons: *He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt, them that come to God by him.*

I. In the firſt place we are to conſider the benefit itſelf, which our bleſſed Saviour procures for, and beſtows upon them *that come unto God by him.* 'Tis no leſs than that of ſalvation:

ſalvation : *ſalvation to the uttermoſt* ; that is, to perfection.

Salvation is a term frequently made uſe of both in the old and new teſtament ; and God ſeems in both teſtaments to delight to be called *the Saviour of his people. The hope of Iſrael, and the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble* [o], ſays the prophet. And in recounting the favours he had wrought for his church, 'tis ſaid, *So he was their Saviour* [p] ; i. e. hereby he made it appear he was their Saviour. And ſays Moſes, in the cloſe of the book of Deuteronomy, *Happy art thou, O Iſrael, a people ſaved by the Lord* [q]. This was their character when they ſang his praiſe : and thus his people rejoiced in him as *the God of their ſalvation* [r], and as *the rock of their ſalvation* [s] ; whether on the account of the more general and publick deliverances of his church, or thoſe of a more private nature, and which regarded particular perſons. But in a ſpecial manner the deliverance of the children of Iſrael out of Egypt, when God entred into covenant with them, became their God and their king in a peculiar manner ; and, by way of covenant, when he delivered them from a ſtate of ſervitude and captivity from among the Egyptians, *ſaved them by a mighty hand and outſtretched arm*, and declared to the world

[o] Jer. 14. 8.
[p] Iſa. 63. 8.
[q] Deut. 33. 29.
[r] Pſal. 65. 5.
[s] Pſal. 95. 1.

that

that he had taken them to himſelf for a peculiar people; this great deliverance gave him deſervedly the name of their Saviour. Other deliverances were beſtowed in various ſucceſſive ages upon the church. After they had provoked God to give them into the hands of their enemies, he was pleaſed frequently to ſave them again, to turn back their captivity, and to raiſe them up *ſaviours* [s], who ſhould fight their battles, reſcue them from their enemies, and protect and govern them according to the divine will. In the hiſtorical part of the old teſtament we have God thus celebrated as *the ſaviour* of that people. And as they were a typical people, and repreſented the church of the new teſtament; in alluſion to this, *ſalvation* is ſo frequently ſpoken of in the new: and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is called *a ſaviour*; and a greater ſaviour he was than any of thoſe whom God raiſed up to his people in former ages of the world, who were but types of him. And indeed as he preſided over that people, and over that diſpenſation, for 'tis ſaid *they tempted Chriſt in the wilderneſs* [t]; ſo he was *their ſaviour* then, but after a manner leſs glorious than he appears to be now under the new teſtament. And accordingly the prophets ſpeak of God under this character, as a ſaviour: *Thou art a God that hideſt thyſelf, O God of Iſrael the*

[s] Neh. 9. 27. | [t] 1 Cor. 10. 9.

ſaviour.

ſaviour [t], as ſays the prophet Iſaiah: and in a multitude of places he is repreſented as *a ſaviour*, tho he was then ſo after a more obſcure manner, as *a God who hid himſelf.*

But now is his ſalvation diſplayed and laid open under the œconomy of the goſpel: and when the prophets ſpeak of God's ſalvation in the moſt pompous ſtyle, and after the moſt magnificent manner, their words are to be referred to the diſpenſation of the goſpel, and the glorious ſtate of our Lord's kingdom; the great ſalvation which ſhould be made known to the world, when he would be *a light to enlighten the Gentiles*, as well as *the ſalvation of his people Iſrael* [u]: which ſhews that the Gentiles ſhould partake of theſe privileges by Jeſus Chriſt. 'Tis ſaid, *Iſrael ſhould be ſaved with an everlaſting ſalvation* [v]. This is *that ſalvation which the prophets*, as the apoſtle Peter ſays, *diligently inquired into, when they ſpake before-hand of the ſufferings of Chriſt, and of the glory that ſhould follow* [w]. So that the hiſtory of the old teſtament, and likewiſe the prophecies of it, all center'd in this thing, *the great ſalvation* which was to be procured by our Lord Jeſus.

In the new teſtament you find this is his character continually: he is called *a Saviour*; and the name Jeſus ſignifies that he is a Saviour. *He ſhall be called Jeſus*, ſays

[t] Iſa. 45. 15.
[u] Luke 2. 32.
[v] Iſa. 45. 17.
[w] 1 Pet. 1. 10, 11.

the

the angel, *becauſe he ſhall ſave his people from their ſins* [x]. This is the ſalvation which the goſpel propoſes to us, and which our Lord beſtows upon us.

This ſalvation comprehends in it a deliverance from the greateſt evils, and the beſtowment of the greateſt benefits. It is a preſent ſalvation from the guilt, the power and bondage of ſin; and it is a *ſalvation from the wrath to come* [y]. How great muſt this ſalvation be! to be delivered in this world from a ſtate of the greateſt ſhame and ſervitude, the moſt diſhonourable which can be to a rational creature; and from a condition obnoxious hereafter to the greateſt pains and torments, even thoſe of eternal death! This is the ſalvation which our Lord beſtows; a ſalvation from ſin and death, and from the wrath to come; from all the enemies of our ſouls, and the juſt demerits of our ſins.

'Tis a poſitive ſalvation too: for whom God ſo delivers, 'tis to make them the objects of his peculiar love; and *in his favour there is life* [z]. And how happy muſt thoſe be who are beloved of God? The bleſſing of *redeeming us from wrath to come*, is too great to be beſtowed, unleſs upon perſons he deſigns to honour by his ſpecial favour and protection; and unleſs he would make them effectually happy. Therefore this ſal-

[x] Mat. 1. 21.
[y] 1 Theſſ. 1. 10.
[z] Pſal. 30. 5.

vation

vation contains in it the beſtowment of all thoſe graces and virtues, all thoſe privileges and comforts which belong to the ſtate of a chriſtian during this life; and likewiſe the ſalvation of the ſoul hereafter, as the apoſtle ſpeaks: *Receiving the end of your faith, even the ſalvation of your ſouls* [a]. Nor is the more noble part the only object of this happineſs; but we are aſſured it contains in it *the redemption of the body* too from the grave: therefore the apoſtle to the Romans ſpeaks of believers *waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of their bodies* [b]. Why are they ſaid to *expect* or hope for this, when the ſame apoſtle tells us before, they are already *the children of God? The Spirit of God beareth witneſs with their ſpirit, that they are children; and, if children, then heirs* [c]: yet they *wait for the adoption*, tho they are children already; that is, they wait for what the apoſtle afterwards calls *the manifeſtation of the ſons of God* [d]: for, in *the redemption of their bodies* at the reſurrection, their adoption ſhall be manifeſted to the world. 'Tis manifeſt to them, by *the Spirit bearing witneſs with their ſpirits, that they are the children of God*: but it will be manifeſt to the world that they are his children, when he owns them publickly at the great day; when their bodies ſhall be redeemed from the

[a] 1 Pet. 1. 9.
[b] Rom. 8. 23.
[c] Ver. 16, 17.
[d] Ver. 19.

grave,

grave, and being re-united to their ſouls, they ſhall thus be received into the joy of their Lord.

This is in general the ſalvation propoſed in the goſpel, and which our Saviour beſtows upon *thoſe that come unto God by him.* And O how great is this ſalvation! as the author of this epiſtle obſerves: *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation* [e]? A great ſalvation indeed; for 'tis *being ſaved to the uttermoſt:* which is the other expreſſion we are to explain under this head.

The word in the original ſignifies *ſaving to perfection* [f], and may comprehend the extent and univerſality, the height and the greatneſs of the degree of this ſalvation. It ſurpaſſes any other deliverance which can be compared with it. When God ſaved his people formerly from the hands of the Egyptians, it was from a ſtate of ſervitude: but what is the ſlavery of the body to that of the ſoul? The diſproportion is very obvious, and greatly enhances the value of the ſalvation our Lord procures and beſtows; as 'tis the ſalvation of the ſoul, and that too from the moſt ſordid captivity to ſin and Satan. *His ſervants we are, to whom we obey* [g]. If we obey Satan and ſin, we are their ſlaves. Wicked men are deſcribed as *led captive by the devil at his will.* There is no bondage ſo vile and ſo baſe as that of ſin.

[e] Heb. 2. 3.
[f] Σώζειν εἰς τὸ παντελές.
[g] Rom. 6. 16.

The Jews were delivered from the hands of their enemies by the mighty arm of God, and with great ſigns and wonders; but our deliverance, which is procured by Jeſus Chriſt, is ſtill greater on this account, as is ſufficiently evinc'd by the miraculous things which were done and ſuffered by our Saviour in the carrying on of this ſalvation. Nothing can be more wonderful and ſurprizing than that the Son of God, he who is *God over all* [h], ſhould become the ſon of man, and take upon him the form of a ſervant, human nature in mortal circumſtances, and in a mean and low condition; and live a life attended with ſo much affliction and poverty, with ſo many troubles and ſorrows; and, at laſt, die a death the moſt ignominious and painful, in order to ſave us from our ſpiritual enemies. God exerted his power againſt the enemies of his church, when he ſaved his people from Egypt; but he has ſhed his blood to ſave us from the bondage of ſin. What an aſtoniſhing diſplay is here of the divine mercy and grace? This ſurely grace to the uttermoſt; for what can be compared with it? *The angels deſire to look into* theſe things [i]; and well they beſpeak their curioſity: for this love has a *height and depth, and length and breadth, that paſſes knowledge* [k].

[h] Rom. 9. 5.
[i] 1 Pet. 1. 12.
[k] Eph. 3. 18, 19.

If

If we conſider likewiſe the perſon who was employed in this ſalvation, we may from thence conclude that this was the greateſt of all deliverances and ſalvations. God employed Moſes, when he delivered his people out of Egypt: he was the prophet; and he was a kind of mediator betwixt God and that people when he delivered them, and entered into a covenant with them in the wilderneſs. But not a ſervant now, but a Son is the mediator: the Son of God is engaged in this province to deliver us. Moſes was honoured in the houſe of God greatly as a ſervant, but God hath ſent the Son himſelf to ſpeak to us, and to die for us, in theſe laſt ages of the world. Moſes was an interpreter betwixt God and the people, but our bleſſed Saviour is a true and proper mediator. Conſidering the dignity of his perſon, it appears he came to perform the greateſt deliverance; to work out *ſalvation to the uttermoſt* for us.

Again: If we conſider the continuance, the duration of this deliverance, it will appear to be *ſalvation to the uttermoſt.* The people of Iſrael were ſaved from the hands of their enemies; but when they became idolaters, God gave them up to their enemies again: he gave his ark into captivity, and his glory into the enemies hands. But our bleſſed Saviour, when he comes to deliver his people, it is *with an everlaſting ſal-*

vation [l]. Thoſe who are redeemed by his death, are *ſaved by his life* [m]. And, *if when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his life* [n]. If he had ſo much good will to ranſom us, when in ſo ſad a condition, from the power of ſin; now we are become his friends and favourites, his tender compaſſion will undoubtedly preſerve us. God was pleaſed to caſt off the greateſt part of the Iſraelites at laſt, to reject them, and leave them in hardneſs of heart and blindneſs of mind; but our bleſſed Saviour *ſaves to the uttermoſt*, even with an everlaſting ſalvation.

Their deliverances were temporal, but ours are ſpiritual, and of eternal conſequence to us: they were ſaved from external enemies, from men who hurt their bodies; but we are delivered from the enemies of our ſouls, from the ſlavery of ſin, which is the greateſt bondage; from the tyranny of Satan, from the tyranny of this preſent evil world, and the infectious examples of our fellow-creatures. *Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the ſervants of men* [o]: that is, do not truckle to them, do not entertain their prejudices. As you are the freemen of Chriſt Jeſus, reſign yourſelves intirely to his conduct, and obey him in oppoſition to all others. Thus, I ſay, to be delivered from

[l] Iſa. 45. 17.
[m] Heb. 5. 9.
[n] Rom. 5. 10.
[o] 1 Cor. 7. 23.

the

the dominion of ſin, the tyranny of the world, and the temptations of Satan; to be delivered from the bondage of the fear of death, and from death itſelf; to be delivered from everlaſting torments, from thoſe *chains of darkneſs that are reſerved againſt the judgment of the great day* [p]; what is the greateſt temporal deliverance, when compared with ſuch a ſpiritual ſalvation as this? And then, tho the Iſraelites were not only delivered from their enemies, but God gave them many privileges and immunities, protected them by his providence from their ſurrounding enemies, gave them a land flowing with milk and honey, bleſs'd their basket and their ſtore, bleſs'd them with honour, with health and ſafety, and the like; yet what are all theſe things in compariſon of that ſalvation which extends to the health of our ſouls here, and beſtows on us glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life hereafter? What were all the temporal good things, with which they were ſupply'd, when compar'd with the rich proviſions of this ſalvation? to be fed with the fatneſs of God's houſe, and to be made to drink of the rivers of his pleaſure; to partake of the hidden manna, and the pleaſures which are at his right hand; to have the favour of God, and the light of his countenance; to have the ſenſe of the pardon of ſin, and be made to *rejoice*

[p] Jude 6.

with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory [q]? to have the proſpect of eternal life, and to have a Saviour, who is *entered before as our forerunner* [r], to take poſſeſſion for us of that ſtate of glory which *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive how great it is* [s]? Theſe are the bleſſings which our Lord has procured for us: and thus are we *ſaved to the uttermoſt.* This ſalvation, 'tis true, he beſtows gradually; but it will be known that his people are *ſaved to the uttermoſt* indeed, when their bodies ſhall be redeemed from the power of the grave, and re-united to their ſouls; when they ſhall ſing with triumph, *O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, where is thy victory* [s]? and when they ſhall be *received into the joy of their Lord* [t], to be engaged for ever in the moſt delightful and raviſhing employments; and to be to eternity entertained with the knowledge of him who is infinitely perfect, with ſuch a knowledge as will fill their ſouls with perpetual joy and ſerenity. I propoſed to conſider,

II. The capacity of our Saviour to beſtow this great bleſſing of ſalvation, *even to the uttermoſt.* It is a *great ſalvation*, every one will eaſily acknowledge, by the general deſcription which has been given of it; and

[q] 1 Pet. 1. 8.
[r] Heb. 6. 20.
[s] 1 Cor. 2. 9.
[s] 1 Cor. 15. 55.
[t] Mat. 25. 21.

when

when compared with other ſalvations which God has wrought out for his people, thoſe deliverances ſeem little in compariſon of this. But now we are to conſider the ability of our Lord, who has undertaken to beſtow this great benefit upon us. *He is able*, the apoſtle ſays, *to ſave to the uttermoſt.* And there is no room to doubt of our Saviour's ability, if we conſider him either as he is God, or as he is Mediator.

If we conſider him as God, he has infinite knowledge and wiſdom, infinite power, infinite grace and mercy: and, as poſſeſs'd of theſe divine perfections, what cannot he undertake and bring about for our intereſt? The prophet Iſaiah gives this as the character of him, that he is *mighty to ſave: Who is this that cometh from Edom? with dy'd garments from Bozrah? I, the Lord, mighty to ſave* [u]. He muſt needs be mighty to ſave who is omnipotent. There is no power can reſiſt him with ſucceſs; for all creatures are intirely ſubject to him, and he *does whatſoever he pleaſes in heaven and earth, in the ſea, and all deep places* [v]. *None can ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him, what doſt thou* [w]? As he *has all power*, ſo he is infinitely knowing and wiſe: he underſtands all things, and knows how to produce what effects he pleaſes; and to alter the courſe of nature, if he ſees fit to bring about his deſigns. He knows how

[u] Iſa. 63. 1.
[v] Pſal. 135. 6.
[w] Dan. 4. 35.

to contrive the things which are moſt difficult, and to unite and reconcile thoſe things which ſeem very oppoſite. It was infinite wiſdom which contrived the way how we might be delivered, and yet the juſtice of God honoured as well as his mercy; how ſin might be puniſhed, and yet the ſinner forgiven; how ſinners might be encouraged to hope for eternal life, and yet at the ſame time be diſcouraged from committing ſin. *Mercy and truth* were made to *meet together*, and *righteouſneſs and peace* to *kiſs each other* [x]. And thus the apoſtle tells the Corinthians, that Chriſt is both *the wiſdom and the power of God* [y]. But farther, conſider infinite grace and mercy, what will not that effect? What wonderful things have been performed by men in behalf of thoſe they love, things which ſeem to ſurpaſs the force of human nature, when love has been the motive; love which is ſtrong as death? Some friends, what have they not done, what have they not ſuffered for others? But, when we conſider divine love, infinite mercy and goodneſs, infinite grace; what could not that effect? what could not that bring about in favour of poor unworthy ſinners? Our bleſſed Lord, who has ſhewn how much he loved mankind by aſſuming their nature, becoming *bone of their bone, and fleſh of their fleſh*, has abundantly de-

[x] Pſal. 85. 10. | [y] 1 Cor. 1. 24.

clared

clared what his love could do, what his love could ſuffer: and no inſtance in the world was ever like him, either in doing or ſuffering, to bring about this ſalvation. He who has ſo much power, ſo much wiſdom and knowledge, and ſo much love, is certainly *able to ſave to the uttermoſt.*

But as a perſon ought not only to have infinite power, but infinite wiſdom and love, who ſhall undertake ſuch a province as this; ſo he muſt have a call from God. *No man takes this honour* as prieſt, or any other province as mediator; no man ſhould take this honour to himſelf, *but he that is called of God, as was Aaron* [z]. Now our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is properly inſtated in the office of mediator. To this purpoſe the Father and holy Spirit concurred in the work of our redemption; and our bleſſed Lord, as ſecond perſon in the Trinity, is inveſted in this office: he is confirmed therein, as you have heard, *with an oath* [a]. And he was qualified for it; for he was able to ſuffer and die for our ſakes, to be our ſurety, and to make ſatisfaction to divine juſtice for us. And he had power to riſe from the dead, that he might be our interceſſor. He is a divine perſon, and, as ſuch, fit to negotiate the affairs of God; a proper perſon to treat with God, ſeeing he has an infinite intereſt in the Father, being *his only begotten Son*, and of the ſame eſſence with

[z] Heb. 5. 4. [a] *Chap.* 7. 20, 21.

him:

him: and, on the other hand, he has a great and prevailing intereſt with men, ſeeing he is of their own nature, and ſo capable of treating with them in the moſt familiar manner; of perſuading them, and arguing with them from things which come under their cogniſance, and which are ſuited to their apprehenſions, from what he has done and ſuffered, and the example he has ſet them during his converſation in the world. He is qualified to preſent their petitions with the greateſt tenderneſs, *ſeeing he is touch'd with a feeling of their infirmities* [b]; he is capable of repreſenting to them the divine perfections and requirements after the moſt perfect manner, ſeeing he is fully acquainted with the will of his Father. In a word, he is perfectly qualified as a king to govern them; and he is *ſuch an high prieſt as became us, ſeeing he is holy, harmleſs, undefiled, ſeparate from ſinners, and made higher than the heavens* [c].

Our bleſſed Saviour, you ſee from theſe characters, *is able to ſave to the uttermoſt.* Such a mediator as this *became us*; and there is room to put our confidence in one ſo well qualified. He is able to conquer Satan: *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world* [d]: he can break his ſnares, and burſt his bands. Thus, when he was engaged in this conflict upon earth, and in our

[b] Heb. 4. 15.
[c] *Chap.* 7. 26.
[d] 1 John 4. 4.

fleſh;

fleſh; *I beheld Satan*, ſays he, *falling from heaven as lightning* [e]. Tho the powers of darkneſs were combined againſt our Saviour, yet he overcame them all. They attacked him moſt violently when he was in a ſtate of weakneſs, that I may uſe the apoſtle's expreſſion; *He was crucified in weakneſs* [f]. *Now is your hour, and the power of darkneſs* [g]. But yet again the apoſtle ſays to the Coloſſians, that *he triumphed over principalities and powers*; that *he ſpoiled them, and made a ſhew of them openly upon the croſs* [h]: and, if when *crucified in weakneſs*, in a mortal ſtate, he gain'd this victory; of what conqueſt or victory ſhould we diſtruſt now our Saviour is upon his throne? Tho he once died, he henceforth *dieth no more* [i]: now he is immortal in regard of his human nature, and has the command of all angels and of all men, the dominion over all creatures; for *all authorities and powers are made ſubject to him* [k]. Moreover, he who has an almighty power, and the hearts of men in his hands; and who, as our mediator, has received the promiſe of the holy Spirit to pour forth upon us, he is undoubtedly able to conquer all our prejudices, and bring our ſouls into a ſubjection to himſelf: nothing ſo perverſe but can be conquered by omnipotent grace. He who has ſuch an intereſt

[e] Luke 10. 18.
[f] 2 Cor. 13. 4.
[g] Luke 22. 53.
[h] Col. 2. 15.
[i] Rom. 6. 9.
[k] 1 Pet. 3. 22.

with

with his Father, and in whom his Father *is well-pleaſed* [l], as he has declared; and well-pleaſed not only with his perſon but his undertaking, and has given him, according to his promiſe, ſucceſs in it: he, who has this intereſt in the Father, is capable of ſhedding abroad his love into our hearts, and procuring for us the joy of his ſalvation, that *peace of God which paſſes all underſtanding* [m]. He who is thus qualified can make reconciliation; he *has the hearts of men in his hands* [n], and can turn them towards God: and, as he has *offered a ſacrifice well-pleaſing to God*, ſo *the pleaſure of the Lord will proſper in his hands* [o]. And we cannot fail of being reconciled, if our Lord Jeſus Chriſt operates upon our ſouls after ſuch a manner; and this he will do upon *thoſe who come to God by him*. No trouble, be it ever ſo great, can be able utterly to depreſs our minds, if our Lord ſupports us by the right hand of his righteouſneſs. Seeing he is our interceſſor, we ſhall be preſerved in the hour of temptation; he will give us ſtrength to bear whatſoever he ſhall ſee fit to lay upon us. He who has promiſed his preſence with us, *when we paſs thro' the fire or thro' the water*, that the one ſhould not *overwhelm us*, nor the other *devour us* [p]; he who has promiſed to be with us in all kind of trouble, and that

[l] 2 Pet. 1. 17.
[m] Phil. 4. 7.
[n] Prov. 21. 1.
[o] Iſa. 53. 10.
[p] *Chap.* 43. 2.

he

he *will never leave us nor forſake us, but guide us by his counſel till he bring us to glory* [q]; he who has expreſſed his love in the greateſt inſtances in doing and ſuffering for us, will now certainly purſue his own conqueſt, and will not loſe the price of his own blood. Seeing he has undergone the reproach of the croſs, and is raiſed to a ſtate of dignity and glory, at his Father's right hand; how can we think he'll loſe his own labour? Can we imagine he will not perfect that work, the foundation of which was laid in his own blood? that he will not watch over his own church, when he has promiſed *the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it* [r]? And that he *who ever lives to intercede for us*, will refuſe to offer the prayers of *them that come* humbly *to God by him*, and commit themſelves to him, as to a merciful Creator and Redeemer? Is it to be imagined he will not *ſave to the uttermoſt?* that he will not ſurmount all difficulties which ſtand in the way of our ſalvation? As the apoſtle was confident that *he who had begun a good work* upon the primitive chriſtians, *would carry it on* [s]; ſo may we confide in the divine grace and mercy, that he will not ſuffer thoſe to become a prey to the temptations of Satan whom he has recovered from that bondage by the efficacy of his grace. Is it to be imagined that our Lord is not *able to ſave to the*

[q] Pſal. 73. 24.
[r] Mat. 16. 18.
[s] Phil. 1. 6.

uttermoſt, when you ſee he is, in all reſpects, ſo well qualified for this purpoſe? Why then ſhould his mercy be at any time doubted of?

But I muſt farther obſerve to you, that his *ability to ſave to the uttermoſt*, includes his willingneſs to do ſo; for, if our Lord were able to ſave, and yet not willing, we might be in a ſtate of dejection indeed: but he is willing, as well as able. And that is evident from another place in this epiſtle, where the apoſtle, ſpeaking of Chriſt, ſays; *Who, in the days of his fleſh, when he had offered up prayers and ſupplication with ſtrong crying and tears, unto him that was able to ſave him from death*[s], &c. Our Lord did not only believe his Father was able to ſave him from death, but willing; for the will of God in that caſe was not to be doubted of. So Chriſt is *able to ſave*, and who can doubt of his willingneſs? When he was ſo ready to ſhed his blood for enemies and rebels, and when he foreſaw the pains of the croſs, and had before he came to it felt that agony in the garden, which made him ſweat drops of blood, yet would go on and make his life a ſacrifice; he, who has ſuffered this, to be ſure muſt be willing to ſave. So in the 3d chapter of Daniel, when the three children declared to the tyrannical king, who would have had them bow down to an idol, that

[s] Heb. 5. 7.

they

they would not do it; *Our God*, ſay they, *is able to ſave us*, able to deliver us: and how is this explained afterwards? *and that he will deliver us* [t]: for he did effectually deliver them; and it was by faith they were delivered from the flames of fire. Thus when our Lord ſays, *None are able to pluck his ſheep out of his Father's hands* [u], he intimates ſome would attempt it, be willing to do it: and ſo when his ability to ſave us, is ſpoken of, it ſignifies that he is willing to do it. When *Abraham was perſuaded that what God had promiſed he was able to perform* [v]; he not only believed he was able, but that he would perform it: for he had ſaid, *in Iſaac his ſeed ſhould be called* [w]; therefore he believed he would be preſerved or raiſed from the dead. So in the 11th to the Romans, when the apoſtle ſpeaks of God's being able to graft the Gentiles into the ſtock of the good olive-tree, he ſignifies he had ſufficiently declared he would do it. And in the 14th chapter of that epiſtle, *ver.* 4. when the apoſtle ſpeaks of God's *being able to make his people ſtand*, he ſignifies that *he would do it: Yea, he ſhall be holden up*; *for God is able to make him ſtand.* So when 'tis ſaid to the Corinthians, he *is able to make all grace abound* [x]; it ſignifies his willingneſs ſo to do. And when the apoſtle Jude aſcribes

[t] Dan. 3. 17.
[u] John 10. 29.
[v] Rom. 4. 21.
[w] *Chap.* 9. 7.
[x] 2 Cor. 9. 8.

praiſe *to him that is able to keep us from falling* [y], he intends the ſame thing. So that when 'tis ſaid here, our Saviour *is able to ſave to the uttermoſt them that come to God by him*; 'tis plain it imports he is very willing to do ſo. And this one conſideration is indeed enough to prove it: he has ſuffered to the uttermoſt, in order *to ſave them to the uttermoſt*; and now that it coſts him no pain, no ſorrow, our Lord will certainly put in execution all that remains to perfect their ſalvation, that they may be perfect and compleat in that day, that they may be made perfect in glory.

The third thing to be conſidered, is, the qualification of the perſons upon whom our Saviour is able to beſtow, and will beſtow this great bleſſing of *ſalvation to the uttermoſt*; and that is *thoſe that come to God by him*. But this, and the other part of the text, muſt be referred to another time. I will conclude with making two or three reflections. And,

1. If this ſalvation, which our Lord is capable of beſtowing, be, as you have heard, ſo great ſalvation; how much does it concern us all to ſeek after it? How miſerable are thoſe who are in a ſtate of ſin, obnoxious to the wrath of God, under the ſentence of his law, the ſlaves of Satan, and led captive by him at his will; under ſpiritual bondage

[y] Jude 24.

to

to sin, and exposed to the judgments of God in this world, and in that which is to come? How miserable a state is it *to have no hope*, to be without hope, without Christ, *without God in the world* [z]; and not only without hope, but to have reason to fear everlasting torments? Why, *to such* persons as these, *is the word of salvation sent*, as the gospel is called [a]: and, it may be said, *This day is salvation come to this place* [b]. And so every where, where the gospel is preached, salvation comes. 'Tis offered to men, even *to the chief of sinners* [c]: for Christ is able *even to save them*; *to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him.* Of how great importance is it for men to seek after the salvation of their souls, and the redemption of their bodies from the power of the grave by a blessed resurrection? to be delivered from a multitude of evils which encompass them here, and to be made completely happy, according to their most inlarged desires and wishes hereafter? How great is this blessing! how wonderful these advantages! And *how shall we escape* then, *if we neglect so great salvation* [d]?

2. And as for those who have partaken of this salvation; how should they adore and magnify the divine grace? We were *children of wrath by nature, even as others* [e]; we

[z] Eph. 2. 12.
[a] Acts 13. 26.
[b] Luke 19. 9.
[c] 1 Tim. 1. 15.
[d] Heb. 2. 3.
[e] Eph. 2. 3.

were *without hope*, we were *alienated from the life of God* [f], and from his covenant; we were without any due ground of hope while in a ſtate of ſin; we were in a ſtate of ſervitude to Satan, and enemies to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, while under the power and dominion of ſin: but our caſe is altered, and we are *turned from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to God* [g]. If there be *a new heart*, and *a right ſpirit put within us* [h]; if we have *our conſciences ſprinkled with the blood of Chriſt* [i], and have *received remiſſion of ſins thro' faith in his name* [k]; have been reconciled to God by him; how ſhould we adore and bleſs the divine grace, that ſo great a benefit has been beſtowed upon us? And how much does it become us to walk worthy of the goſpel of our ſalvation; and to ſeek earneſtly that Chriſt, *who ever lives to intercede for us*, would grant us the continual ſupplies of his *grace to help us in time of need* [l]?

3. If our bleſſed Lord be thus *able to ſave to the uttermoſt*, what confidence ſhould we have in his merit and righteouſneſs, in his mercy and grace? As we ſhould be careful to walk worthy of this ſalvation, ſo we ſhould have a care of provoking him, by diſtruſting his good will towards us. Diffidence in ourſelves may make us humble; but diſtruſt of

[f] Eph. 4. 18.
[g] Acts 26. 18.
[h] Ezek. 18. 31.
[i] Heb. 10. 22.
[k] Acts 10. 43.
[l] Heb. 4. 16.

him

him is reproaching him, and *charging him fooliſhly* [m]. Let us have a care of offending him by our unbelief. It becomes us to truſt in his ability, and to exerciſe holy confidence in his good will and favour, ſeeing he has given us ſuch proof and demonſtration as this. But let us, by no means, take occaſion from hence to be negligent; for, as this is directly contrary to the deſign and tendency of his grace, ſo it would greatly provoke him. Let us be *diligent to work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling*, at the ſame time that we believe *'tis God that worketh in us to will and to do, of his good pleaſure* [n].

[m] Job 1. 22.

[n] Phil. 2. 12, 13.

SERMON VII.

Preach'd at *PINNERS-HALL*, Sept. 6, 1707.

HEBREWS vii. 25.

Wherefore he is able alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them.

The ſecond SERMON on this text.

I Now proceed to the laſt thing under the firſt general head; namely,

III. The qualification of the perſons who partake of this ſo great ſalvation. They are thus deſcribed in the text; *Thoſe that come unto God by him.* Our Lord *is able to ſave to the uttermoſt:* but all men are not ſaved in fact; none partake of this great benefit but *thoſe that come unto God by Jeſus Chriſt.* And here it will be requiſite for us to conſider,

1. What

1. What it is *to come to God.* And then,
2. What it is *to come to God by Jeſus Chriſt.*

1. What it is *to come to God.*

To come to God, is a phraſe very frequently uſed in the holy ſcriptures. It does ſuppoſe, in the firſt place, men to have been in a ſtate of alienation from him, and indeed of enmity againſt him: therefore they are frequently called upon by the prophets, and by our Lord and his apoſtles, to *return,* and *come unto God.* Sin ſeparates between God and men: as he is infinitely holy, it alienates his affections from his creatures; and, as ſin depraves their minds, it makes them oppoſite to God, and alienates their affections from him. As ſin is the moſt unnatural thing in the world, I mean moſt contrary to the original nature and deſign of man, as formed by God; ſo it muſt tend, in its own nature, to make men miſerable: and therefore, when their miſery is deſcribed by the apoſtle Paul, he repreſents them as *alienated from the life of God, and without God in the world* [o]; and as being in a ſtate of enmity againſt him. Conſider him as the ſupreme good, as being abſolutely perfect; and conſider that his creatures were made by him, and muſt be intirely dependent upon him: what then muſt be the conſequence of his averſion to them, and of their averſion to

[o] Eph. 4. 18.

him? Their averſion to him, in its own nature, makes them miſerable; and his averſion to them, would heap poſitive miſery and deſolation upon them. *In his favour is life* [p], but his anger muſt needs produce death, eternal death, if it abides upon men. Now the goſpel calls men to *return*, and *to come unto God*; that is, it invites them to receive the tokens of his favour and kindneſs: it propoſes to them that they may be reſtored unto his affection, and that they may be made happy, tho they have rendered themſelves miſerable: it acquaints them, that tho they have deſtroyed themſelves for lack of knowledge, yet in him they are ſafe. And thus our bleſſed Saviour expoſtulates with men in his word, and invites ſinners to come to him: *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you reſt* [q]. And the prophet Iſaiah: *Ho, every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price* [r]. And, *Come, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord: tho your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be white as ſnow; tho they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool* [s]. This manner of ſpeaking is uſed to ſignify, that they ſhould lay down their arms, as 'twere, and ſubmit to their Saviour, in expectation of mercy from him; no more

[p] Pſal. 30. 5.
[q] Mat. 11. 28.
[r] Iſa. 55. 1.
[s] *Chap.* 1. 18.

perſiſt

perſiſt in rebellion againſt him, but comply with his gracious propoſals. When men are conſcious of guilt, if there be no hope of mercy, there is no encouragement to return, but they are deſperate in their ſins, and continue their averſion to that Being from whom they expect nothing but ſevere puniſhment: but when God declares he has found a ranſom, and has deviſed means, by which his baniſhed may return, and may not for ever be expelled from him; when he adds the ſolemnity of an oath to his declaration, *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I deſire not the death of a ſinner, but that he ſhould return and live*[s]; this gives ſome encouragement to men to think of eſcaping the wrath to come, and avoiding that condemnation which they have deſerved by their ſins. And therefore *coming to God*, or returning to him, in the language of ſcripture, does import every thing which tends to our everlaſting advantage; and ſignifies the whole progreſs of the divine work upon the ſouls of men, to unite them to God, after they have been ſuch ſtrangers and aliens.

Accordingly, you will find this phraſe is uſed in the ſcripture in the general, to ſignify our reconciliation to God. *Thoſe that come unto God*, have all thoſe things ſaid of them, and thoſe privileges and bleſſings promiſed to them, which are beſtowed upon perſons

[s] Ezek. 33. 11.

ſaid to be reconciled, to be converted, to be regenerate, and the like. More particularly,

(1.) It imports the ſenſe of mens guilt and miſery: for nothing will put the ſoul in motion but the avoiding of miſery, or obtaining ſome good. When we are ſenſible we are in a ſtate of miſery by our ſins, and are become obnoxious to God's ſevere reſentments; when we deſire conſequently a deliverance from this miſery, and when there is *hope ſet before us* of obtaining the divine favour, and of being happy for ever; this puts the ſoul in motion. *Incline your ear*, ſays the Lord, *and come unto me; hear, and your ſouls ſhall live: and I will make an everlaſting covenant with you, even the ſure mercies of David* [t]. When the prophet invites men to partake of the bleſſings of the goſpel, at the beginning of the ſame chapter, *Ho, every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters*, &c. he ſuppoſes them to be *hungring and thirſting after righteouſneſs*; for 'tis impoſſible to move men who are in a ſtate of intire ſtupidity, and have no ſenſe of their miſery. Till they are convinced that they are miſerable, and are obnoxious to the divine wrath, they will not take one ſtep towards everlaſting happineſs. They are the *thirſty*, who are *called to come to the waters. The whole have no need of a phyſician, but*

[t] Iſa. 55. 3.

they

they that are ſick. Chriſt came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance [u]. Therefore men muſt be ſenſible of their guilt, and, conſequently, of their miſery, or elſe they *will not come to him that they may have life*; as our Lord ſpeaks of thoſe who thought themſelves righteous: *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life* [v]. They were not convinced of their great guilt, and of the miſery conſequent thereupon. In the 3d chapter of Jeremiah, *ver.* 22. God ſays to the people of Iſrael; *Return, ye backſliding children, and I will heal your backſlidings:* and what is the anſwer? *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* "We come unto thee, ſenſible of our guilt, "and of our miſery." Again,

(2.) It ſignifies a deſire of being informed and inſtructed. Thus in the 7th chapter of John, *ver.* 37, 38. when our Saviour preached, he called aloud to the people in the laſt day, the great day of the feaſt: *If any man thirſt, let him come unto me and drink: He that believeth on me, as the ſcripture ſaith, out of his belly ſhall flow rivers of living water.* They who would receive his divine inſtruction, ſhould have the advantage and aſſiſtance of his Spirit; ſo that they ſhould be capable of inſtructing others. Thoſe who would thus come unto him, as their divine maſter, to teach them, are the perſons en-

[u] Mark 2. 17. | [v] John 5. 40.

couraged

couraged by his promiſe: and therefore he calls upon men, Mat. 11. 28, 29. *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt: take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. To come to him,* is to be willing to be informed and inſtructed as his diſciples. So in the Revelation: *Whoſoever will, let him come: the Spirit ſaith, come; and the bride ſaith, come; and, whoſoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely* [w]: be inſtructed and informed of thoſe divine truths which are contained in the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt. Moreover,

(3.) It ſignifies prayer. To *come unto God,* is to pray to him: and, indeed, it ſignifies the worſhip of God in general. So Heb. 10. 1. 'tis ſaid: *For the law having a ſhadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with thoſe ſacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.* It can never make thoſe, who *worſhip* that way by ſacrifice, truly perfect: *For,* as the apoſtle ſays in the 4th verſe, *the blood of bulls and goats can never take away ſin*; that's impoſſible. So Heb. 11. 6. *He that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is; and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him. He that comes to God,* that is, he who will worſhip God, muſt believe his being, or elſe there can be no ground to worſhip him; and he muſt believe, *he is a rewarder of them who*

[w] Rev. 17. 22.

diligently

diligently ſeek him, otherwiſe there is no encouragement to hope for ſucceſs in his addreſſes. Thus the pſalmiſt, addreſſing himſelf to God, ſays: *O thou, that heareſt prayer, to thee ſhall all fleſh come* [x]; that is, to pray unto thee, and to worſhip thee. So Iſaiah, when he propheſies of our bleſſed Saviour, and oppoſes him to all idols and falſe Gods, ſays: *Surely ſhall one ſay, in the Lord have I righteouſneſs and ſtrength; even to him ſhall men come* [y]. Inſtead of worſhipping idols, as they did before, *to him ſhall men come: and all that are incenſed againſt him ſhall be aſhamed.* They ſhall worſhip him, as is ſaid in the foregoing verſes: *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none elſe*, &c. *To him every knee ſhall bow*; that is, ſhall worſhip him. *Even to him ſhall men come*; him they ſhall worſhip. And, conſequently,

(4.) It ſignifies obedience; as in that forecited paſſage, Mat. 11. our Saviour requires men *to come to him*, that is, *to take his yoke upon them*, and to obey him: for, to become his diſciples, ſignifies to obey. And ſo *to come to the Father*, to *come to God*, as it is in the words of our text, muſt imply mens having a ſenſe of their guilt and miſery upon their minds: it muſt ſignify a willingneſs and inclination to be informed and inſtructed in the true way of ſalvation; and their ſub-

[x] Pſal. 65. 2. | [y] Iſa. 45. 24.

miſſion

miſſion to God, and worſhipping of him: and worſhip imports not only prayer, but other religious acts; and certainly includes obedience to him. None indeed can *come*, but *thoſe whom the Father draws* [z]: and when he upbraids ſome who would not come to him, the meaning is, they would not put their truſt and confidence in him; they would not obey him. According therefore to this general notion, it contains in it the whole of religion; and thoſe who would be ſaved, according to the words of our text, muſt thus *come unto God.* They muſt come with a ſenſe of their guilt and of their miſery; they muſt be willing to be taught and inſtructed; they muſt put their confidence in him; they muſt worſhip and obey him. We come then to conſider,

2. What it is *to come to God by Chriſt. He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt, them that come unto God by him.* Men do not approach the throne of God with acceptance, in any other way than he has conſtituted and appointed, and revealed to them; and that is by Jeſus Chriſt: *none comes to the Father but by him.* 'Tis true, none can come to Chriſt unleſs *the Father draw him* by his prevailing grace; for 'tis by the divine grace that we are informed and inſtructed concerning Jeſus the true Meſſiah, and that our feet are turned into the way of peace. 'Tis by the divine

[z] John 6. 44.

grace

grace that our hearts are touched at firſt, and inclined to inquire after *the truth, as it is in Jeſus*, and after the way of ſalvation. But when we are informed and inſtructed in the way, then we are to addreſs ourſelves to God after the manner he has conſtituted and appointed. This is *the new and living way* [a]. Thus Chriſt declares of himſelf: *I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man can come to the Father but by me* [b]. When men are ſenſible of their own guilt, how is it poſſible for them to entertain any proper apprehenſions of the majeſty of God, and the holineſs and juſtice of his nature, without being ſurprized, without being overwhelmed with fear and trembling? The beſt of men, when under theſe impreſſions, have diſcovered an extraordinary terror of mind: and therefore Job begs, *he would not ſuffer his dread to make him afraid* [c]; and declares, he *could not ſtand in the ſight of God* to juſtify himſelf [d], and wiſhes there might be *a days-man*, or mediator *between them* [e], that ſo he might ſpeak and open his cauſe to him. God is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity* [f]: he is infinitely holy; and therefore the moſt holy men have *abhorred themſelves, and repented in duſt and aſhes*, when they have conſidered that. When Abraham is praying for Sodom particularly, how hum-

[a] Heb. 10. 20.
[b] John 14. 6.
[c] Job 13. 21.
[d] Job 42. 5, 6. *ch.* 9. 20.
[e] Job 9. 33.
[f] Hab. 1. 13.

bly does he expreſs himſelf; and what apology does he make, becauſe he took upon him again and again to ſpeak to God? He took upon him, who was but *duſt and aſhes.* So when men ſeriouſly conſider the infinite juſtice of God, and the perfection of his law, and, at the ſame time, how much they have provoked the one, and violated the other; when they conſider the terrible judgments their ſins have righteouſly deſerved, it is no wonder they are ready to ſink down into deſpair. But to prevent this, God has revealed to us a way whereby we may approach him. Tho *he is a conſuming fire*, on the account of the ſtrictneſs of his juſtice, and the glory of his majeſty; and tho we are but as dry ſtubble, and might expect to be conſumed by him, yet he has ſhewn us there is a way whereby we may approach him with acceptance: the luſtre of his glory is ſo temper'd, as it ſhines in the face of Jeſus Chriſt, who is man as well as God, that the diſcovery of the divine perfections becomes ſupportable to us. And, on the other hand, the ſatisfaction our Lord Chriſt has made, by his atoning ſacrifice, has rendered it conſiſtent with the holineſs and juſtice of God to be reconciled to us: for, ſeeing we *come by Jeſus Chriſt*, by virtue of our union with him, we are allied to the divine majeſty, and become *heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt* [g]. If he is *not aſhamed to call us brethren* [h]; *he, who is the brightneſs*

[g] Rom. 8. 17. [h] Heb. 2. 11.

of

of his Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon [i]; under his umbrage we may be accepted, and the Father will not be aſhamed to call us children: *He is not aſhamed to be called their God* [k]; as we are aſſured by the author of this epiſtle. 'Tis under this character therefore we are to conſider Jeſus Chriſt. We are *to come to God by him:* that is, we are to worſhip God in his name; to believe in him for the divine favour, and for eternal life. 'Tis thro' Jeſus Chriſt, as Mediator, we are to offer our worſhip to God. We have been ungrateful enemies, as well as aliens: it muſt therefore be of the utmoſt conſequence to have a right notion of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt as our Mediator. And,

(1.) The notion which is given of Chriſt, as Mediator, is that of an *interpreter*, or *meſſenger* between God and men. Moſes is called a mediator in this ſenſe; *as the law was delivered by his hands* [l]. God converſed with him after a moſt peculiar and intimate manner, as a man converſes with his friend; and communicated to him his will, the whole ſcheme of that religion which was delivered to the Jews. Thus the Lord, by the mediation of his ſervant Moſes, propoſes to the people the terms of a covenant; and that he would beſtow upon that nation peculiar favours, if they would agree to thoſe terms, and would worſhip him according to the

[i] Heb. 1. 3.
[k] Heb. 11. 16.
[l] Gal. 3. 19.

manner

manner preſcribed, and keep thoſe laws he enjoined them: he would take upon him the government of them; he would be their king, and would protect them from their enemies. Thus when they came to worſhip, according to his inſtitution, upon the three anniverſary feaſts, their frontiers ſhould be guarded by his providence, ſo that their enemies ſhould not make any invaſion upon them: and the people do conſent to the terms of this covenant; they ſolemnly profeſs that God ſhould be their God, and they would worſhip him according to his inſtitution; that they would put their truſt in his name, and be obedient to his laws. So far Moſes was capable of being a mediator, in a proper ſenſe. Thus was our Lord Jeſus Chriſt mediator, in a proper ſenſe alſo; and a mediator of a higher character than Moſes. Moſes himſelf exceedingly *feared and quaked* [m] when he converſed ſo intimately with God: he was but a man, but our bleſſed Saviour was a divine perſon; and, as he aſſumed human nature, was qualified therefore above all others, to be a meſſenger or interpreter. God was pleaſed to communicate his mind by Chriſt: *The law was given by Moſes, but grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt* [n]. Chriſt gave a more ample account of the divine will, and revealed things which lay obſcure before: and whereas the reve-

[m] Heb. 12. 21. | [n] John 1. 17.

lation

lation which was given by Moſes, was full of terror, and expoſed men to fear; now, under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, the terms of the covenant our Lord exhibits, are ſo mild and ſo full of grace, of love and mercy, and the divine promiſes are ſo explicit concerning eternal life, that *life and immortality* are ſaid *to be brought to light* °, in a more eminent manner. Thus did our Lord Jeſus, as an *interpreter*, or *meſſenger* from the Father, declare to men the gracious deſigns of God: and what he did not particularly declare in his own preaching, while upon earth, he enabled his apoſtles to publiſh, in his name, by the effuſion of his holy Spirit upon them after he was aſcended on high. And as Moſes went into the mount, to carry back what the people ſaid concerning the divine covenant, their promiſe and engagement to obey the laws God had preſcribed them; ſo our bleſſed Lord is aſcended into heaven: and as he there *ever lives to intercede for us*, ſo he bears upon his heart the names of the people; and in this he was typified by Aaron, who bore upon his breaſt-plate the names of the ſeveral tribes which had engaged in ſolemn covenant with God. But,

(2.) The notion of mediator does not only ſignify a meſſenger from God, and an interpreter between God and the people; but it ſignifies one who *reconciles* God and man.

° 2 Tim. i. 10.

This is the character which is given of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour: and Moſes could not be called a *reconciler* in a proper ſenſe, tho indeed he was ſo typically. He put himſelf in the breach, when God ſaid he would deſtroy the people: and *he had deſtroyed them, had not Moſes, his ſervant, ſtood in the breach* [p]. Thus God was intreated of Moſes, and told him he would ſpare them, that he would not cut them off. And, notwithſtanding there are ſevere inſtances of his judgments upon this perverſe people, yet, when Moſes pleads for them, God offers to make of him a great nation, ſaying, *Let me alone, that I may deſtroy them* [q]; intimating, that without a mediator they muſt periſh: no, ſays Moſes, rather *blot me out of thy book* [r]; *blot me out of the book of life*, rather cut me off from this earth, than let this whole people be deſtroyed. This ſignified the neceſſity of a mediator, by way of reconciliation, to interpoſe between God and them, and to appeaſe the divine wrath. But then, as Moſes could only obtain a temporal preſervation, becauſe he could not make an atonement for ſin; ſo this interceſſion was a typical repreſentation of the work of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who only could make ſuch an atonement. He is a *reconciler* indeed; he was blotted out of God's book, as it were; that is, he became a victim, a ſacrifice upon the croſs:

[p] Pſal. 106. 23.
[q] Deut. 9. 14.
[r] Exod. 32. 32.

his

his life was taken from him; *He was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, and bruiſed for our iniquities* [f]: and God has declared himſelf *well-pleaſed* in his ſacrifice, and that he is reconciled to thoſe who come to him in the name of Jeſus Chriſt; they ſhall obtain mercy, and ſhall ſucceed in their requeſts, who come in his name, and deſire to be waſhed *in that fountain he has opened for ſin and for uncleanneſs* [s]. And, as you heard before, as Moſes could not offer a real atonement to purge the conſcience from ſin, and reconcile God to men; ſo, on the other hand, he could not reconcile men to God. To reconcile God to men, there muſt be an atonement; to reconcile men to God, the obſtinacy of their hearts muſt be taken away, and they muſt be inclined to repentance and new obedience; they muſt renounce their former deeds; they muſt repent in duſt and aſhes; they muſt abandon their ſins, and devote themſelves ſolemnly to the ſervice of God. Now how to produce ſuch effects as theſe upon the minds of men, is not to be accounted for, if it be left in the hands of men. The moſt powerful motives which can be produced by them, will have but a very little effect upon thoſe who are *ſold under ſin* [t], and *led captive by the devil at his will* [u]; whoſe natures are corrupt: ſo that it muſt be one who has a proper aſcendent over the minds of men, and

[f] Iſa. 53. 5.
[s] Zech. 13. 1.
[t] 2 Kings 17. 17. Rom. 7. 14.
[u] 2 Tim. 2. 26.

can *turn them as the rivers of water*, who undertakes to reconcile them to God. Notwithſtanding all the perſuaſive things which are ſaid concerning the divine love, and the endearing ſollicitations in the word of God to invite ſinners to be reconciled; the greateſt part of thoſe who profeſs to believe the atoning ſacrifice of our Saviour, do not conform themſelves to the divine will, but ſtill ſin againſt their conſciences, and againſt the terrors of the Lord, and thoſe dreadful threatnings which ſhould perſuade them to abandon their ſins: and therefore to bring about this ſalvation, there muſt be a powerful effect wrought upon their hearts; and this our Lord is capable of doing as mediator, when men *come to God by him.* As there is merit enough in Chriſt to appeaſe the divine anger; ſo likewiſe the powerful aſſiſtance of his grace, which he has merited, and is pleaſed to beſtow, this ſoftens the hearts of men, and makes them contrite; this makes them turn at his counſel, and ſubject themſelves to his will. While he ſpeaks, *their hearts* even *burn within them* [v]; as the diſciples ſaid of what our Saviour diſcourſed to them, when going to Emmaus. While his divine truths are opened to them by the miniſtry of his word, *their hearts are opened* to receive them; as is ſaid of Lydia, when ſhe *attended to the things ſpoken by Paul* [w]. Thus our Lord, as

[v] Luke 24. 32. [w] Acts 16. 14.

mediator,

mediator, has power with God to obtain all the bleſſings of the new covenant for us; and has power on the ſouls of men, to perſuade them effectually to be reconciled to God. But then,

(3.) The notion of a mediator likewiſe comprehends in it the work of *interceſſion.* This I have, in ſome meaſure, intimated to you already; and ſhewn you, in this reſpect, how Chriſt excels Moſes, who endeavoured indeed to reconcile God and the people, at leaſt in regard to their temporal circumſtances, that they ſhould be preſerved and continue for a time in this world. And tho he might, and no doubt did pray earneſtly for ſpiritual bleſſings for them; yet our bleſſed Lord is the only proper and ſucceſsful interceſſor on this account, he only can procure theſe bleſſings. But the notion of an interceſſor, which I principally mean here, is that which relates to the prieſtly office. For, upon the memorable day of the annual atonement, recorded in Lev. 16. when the prieſt had offered ſacrifice, and the fleſh of the beaſts was burnt without the camp, at a diſtance from the ſanctuary, which ſignified that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt muſt ſuffer without the gates of Jeruſalem, bearing our reproach, bearing, as our ſurety, the guilt which was chargeable upon us, becauſe he undertook to ſatisfy for our guilt; ſo as the high prieſt, after this, went into the holy of holies, and burnt incenſe before the mercy-ſeat, this was to ſignify

God's favourable acceptance of thoſe who worſhiped him after the manner he required: and, as he came not without the blood of the ſacrifice, and ſprinkled it towards the mercy-ſeat; ſo this was alſo to ſignify, that our Saviour aſcending into heaven, was to intercede there, and preſent the plea, which is ſo agreeable to God, from the merit of his ſacrifice: and therefore the way is repreſented as *a new and living way* [x], by which we come to God; or, as the word in the original ſignifies, *a freſh way* [y]. Now this way, which our Lord Jeſus ſhews us to glory and happineſs, is by his ſacrifice. It is by this way we muſt go to God; for he pleads his own blood, now he is eſtabliſhed as interceſſor *at the right hand of the throne of the majeſty in the heavens* [z]. But of this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more particularly, when I come to treat of the laſt part of the text, *viz.* of Chriſt's *ever living to make interceſſion for them.* Now Moſes could not be a proper interceſſor on this account, becauſe he was not properly a prieſt: the prieſthood was committed to Aaron. But our Lord is a prieſt, and can be a proper mediator, becauſe as he could offer a ſacrifice to reconcile, ſo he is an interceſſor: he performs that part of the prieſtly function in like manner. We muſt come to God by him therefore, as our interceſſor.

[x] Heb. 10. 20.
[y] Ὁδὸν πρόσφατον. viam recentem. *Ar. Mon.*
[z] Heb. 8. 1.

But

But then, in the laſt place, the notion of a mediator likewiſe comprehends in it that of a third perſon, by whom we have *communion* with another. If we be reconciled to God, there is need that this reconciliation be continued. Reconciliation brings us to his favour; but then we muſt have ſome principle by which we may perſiſt in communion with God: for ſuch is his holineſs and juſtice, and ſuch is our frailty and infirmity, and every breach of his law deſerves ſuch a puniſhment, that here would new differences ariſe, and God would be alienated again and again from us on the account of our ſins, unleſs there was a principle to keep us in his favour and love. This is the character of our bleſſed Lord; he is a *mediator of communion* between God and us. Moſes, or any other, could not be ſo; the dignity of ſuch a mediator as he was, was not great enough to be a principle of communion between God and men. This muſt be a perſon who muſt be intimate with God, equal with the Father, as well as *bone of our bone, and fleſh of our fleſh.* Our Lord is qualified for this becauſe of his divine and human nature: beſides, as he is become a ſurety for us, and that is the notion of his being a reconciler; ſo he has engaged for his people, and *none ſhall be able to pluck them out of his hand* [a]. He has engaged, that *all that the Father has given him, ſhall come to him* [b],

[a] John 10. 28. | [b] *Chap.* 6. 37.

ſhall be preſerved to the laſt day; and he aſſures us, on the part of the Father, that we ſhall have his favour, and continue in his love: if we come in his name, he will beſtow on us his holy Spirit. So that ſeeing we are aſſured of this, and that he is in heaven to this purpoſe, and this depends upon the fit execution of his work as interceſſor, that he ſhould communicate grace and favour from the Father, and ſhould preſent our prayers, and bear our names before his Father; we are ſecure of our communion with God, by virtue of ſuch a Mediator.

Thus are we *to come to God by Jeſus Chriſt.* But theſe things will be more fully explained, ſome of them, when we come to conſider the latter part of the words, *He ever liveth to make interceſſion for them.* Let me conclude at preſent with making two or three reflections from what has been already ſaid. And,

1. As you have heard what it is *to come to God*, to come unto the Father; ſo it behoves us all to conſider this ſeriouſly, that we may not deceive ourſelves in the notion of *coming to God:* for there are many, who do profeſs to come to God, and to embrace the chriſtian religion, to deſire to be informed and inſtructed in the way of ſalvation, to worſhip the true God, and to obey him, and put their confidence in him; but do not, at the ſame time, conſider that 'tis not enough for us to make a profeſſion of doing theſe things, unleſs we really do them. We muſt

have

have a deep contrition on our minds, a deep ſenſe of our guilt, and the miſery enſuing thereupon; or elſe we ſhall never be willing to *come to God* with that earneſt deſire, that *hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs* [c], and be willing to worſhip him after the manner he requires. Unleſs we have deeply conſidered the evil of ſin, and the dreadful conſequences of it; unleſs we have been charmed with the beauty and excellency of holineſs, and our ſouls powerfully touched with the glorious rewards which are ſet before us; we ſhall never come in a proper manner. If we have not a deep ſenſe of ſin, and likewiſe a proper apprehenſion of the greatneſs of the divine love and favour, in inviting poor ſinners to be reconciled to God, we ſhall never have ſuch importunate deſires, never be ſo urgent in our prayers and requeſts to God; we ſhall never put ſuch confidence in him, and hope in his mercy in ſuch a manner as we ought: and therefore *coming to God*, does not only ſignify to profeſs the chriſtian religion, but to believe the doctrines of it, after ſuch a manner, that our thoughts, and reſolutions and actions be determined thereby. And,

2. As there are great invitations and great promiſes to encourage us to *come to God*, and to be reconciled to him; this ſhould engage thoſe who are ſenſible of their miſery, and deſire to be truly happy, to accept the invi-

[c] Mat. 5. 6.

tation

tation, embrace the kind propoſal, come to God, and be at peace with him. The terms are the moſt reaſonable that can be; we are invited with the greateſt importunity in the world, and the way is by Jeſus Chriſt. There is a mediator provided: it might be ſaid, Who ſhall have merit enough to obtain the favour of God? who ſhall make a ſatisfaction for our ſins? Why, all theſe difficulties are removed, in that there is *a new and living way conſecrated*, a mediator eſtabliſhed. Jeſus Chriſt has *all power* and authority, and *is able to ſave to the uttermoſt, thoſe that come to God by him.*

How deplorable a caſe is it then, if men, notwithſtanding theſe propoſals, will not *come to God by Jeſus Chriſt?* It may well be ſaid to ſuch, as it was to the houſe of Iſrael of old, *Why will ye die* [d], when there is a phyſician able to cure all the maladies of your ſouls? Why will you continue at variance with the Almighty, when there is a reconciler, who can put all things into order, who can bring you to God, and render you acceptable in his name; when there is every thing contrived in your favour, and for your advantage? O how great will your guilt be, if, after having been *alienated from the life of God*, you will not be *reconciled to him* [e], notwithſtanding all the offers of his favour! Shall he who is injured ask firſt, firſt ſignify

[d] Ezek. 18. 31. | [e] Col. 1. 21.

his

his good will; and will you continue in rebellion againſt him? Shall he ſtoop ſo low as to ask you to be reconciled, and ſend his embaſſadors to that purpoſe; and yet will you perſiſt in your obſtinacy and rebellion againſt him? How juſt and dreadful will the condemnation of ſuch perſons be, who *neglect this ſo great ſalvation?* Has God found a way for you to be reconciled; and will you deſpiſe his wiſdom, his grace, his bounty, and all this glorious contrivance for your ſalvation? Would he be at the expence of the blood of his Son, to procure theſe bleſſings for you; and will you trample upon ſuch blood? O how great muſt the guilt of ſuch perſons be; who *hear the joyful ſound*, and yet refuſe to obey! who have *the blood of ſprinkling* propoſed to them, and yet *count it an unholy thing*, and refuſe to ſubject themſelves to the methods God has appointed! who are often beſought and intreated by the tender mercies of God in Jeſus Chriſt, that they would *come to him that they might have life*[f], and yet refuſe! But *I hope better things of you, and things that accompany ſalvation; tho I thus ſpeak*[g],

[f] John 5. 40. | [g] Heb. 6. 9.

SER-

SERMON VIII.

Preach'd at *PINNERS-HALL*, Sept. 13, 1707.

HEBREWS vii. 25.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

The third SERMON on this text.

I HAVE, in two discourses from these words, considered the apostle's assertion concerning Christ's ability *to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him:* which is the first thing contained in the text. I now come,

Secondly, To consider the proof of this assertion; the argument upon which it is founded. The article of our Saviour's intercession, is that which the apostle insists on as the argument of his ability to *save those that come to God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

The

The force of the words amounts to this: "Seeing our bleſſed Saviour, the high prieſt "of our profeſſion, now *ever lives to make* "*interceſſion for us*; we may conclude, that "*he is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt, that* "*come unto God by him.*" There are many arguments which prove this: and, in diſcourſing of Chriſt's ability to ſave, I have not confined myſelf to this only, but mentioned ſome others. But as the apoſtle ſingles out this as a ſpecial argument to encourage our hope; therefore 'tis proper we ſhould enter more particularly into the conſideration of it. And here we are to conſider,

I. The *interceſſion* of our Saviour, what it is; that we may have a juſt notion of the matter.

II. The *duration* of his interceſſion, the perpetuity of it; for he is ſaid, *ever to live* for this purpoſe, *to make interceſſion for us.*

III. The force of this argument to prove his *ability to ſave to the uttermoſt, them that come to God by him.* We are to diſcourſe,

I. Of the *interceſſion* of our Saviour itſelf. And here we may conſider both the nature of it, and the neceſſity of it. And,

1. That we may have a clear and diſtinct notion about this matter, we ſhall conſider the

the nature of Chriſt's interceſſion; which we may collect from the uſe of this word in the holy ſcriptures. And this may be compared with the uſe of it in other authors. It is a word we meet with in ſeveral places in the new teſtament, as we ſhall have occaſion to take notice; and it generally ſignifies, in Greek authors, either to go to a perſon to treat with him, or to ſpeak with him; to diſcourſe with a perſon concerning ſome affair; to negotiate ſome affair with another perſon [h]. And this agrees with the interpretation of it in the new teſtament; to *be preſent with* a perſon, and to *negotiate* an affair with ſuch an one. So when we come to God by Jeſus Chriſt, we come to him as an interceſſor, that he would, as it were, interpoſe between us and God the Father, who is, in this caſe, conſidered as the ſovereign judge of the world; that he would mediate for us; that he would be preſent with the Father, and negotiate our concerns, the intereſt of our ſouls. Thoſe who *come to God by him* therefore, muſt have a general notion of the doctrine of his interceſſion, as well as of his ſacrifice, and muſt believe it; for this is one part of his prieſtly office: and, as they apply themſelves to him for *the blood of ſprinkling* to purify their conſciences; ſo likewiſe that he would intercede for them, now he is eſtabliſhed for that purpoſe at the right hand of the throne of God.

[h] Vid. Steph. Theſaur. in verb. ἐντυγχάνω.

Sometimes, in ſcripture, interceſſion is ſpoken of as tranſacted with men; as we ſee in Jer. 36. 25. The princes interpoſed, as having ſome intereſt with the king, and ſome reſpect to the prophet. But frequently 'tis uſed for interceſſion with God; and good men ſometimes are ſaid to intercede with God; which is in a ſenſe very inferior to what is aſcribed to our bleſſed Saviour. 1 Tim. 2. 1. The apoſtle declares, he would have *prayers and interceſſions made for all men:* that is, to pray to God for them, in order to obtain ſuch favours as they want; or to avert ſuch judgments as they are in danger of. And in Jer. 7. 16. the word is uſed to this ſame purpoſe: *Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make interceſſion to me; for I will not hear thee.* This people, as if the Almighty ſhould ſay, I have now abandoned, becauſe of their long impenitency and obſtinacy: therefore forbear to ſtand in the gap to make interceſſion for them, to obtain favour at my hand; for I am reſolved now the ſentence ſhall be executed, which I have ſo long pronounced againſt them. So Iſaiah 59. 16. after a complaint of great profaneneſs and wickedneſs, 'tis ſaid, *God ſaw there was no man, and wondered there was no interceſſor:* no ſuch perſon as Abraham, who interceded ſo earneſtly for Sodom: *and wondered that there was no interceſſor;* ſcarce a man to be found who prayed for the people, who interpoſed

terpoſed to avert the divine judgments, and implore God's favour upon them. And thus you will find the word uſed in other places of the old teſtament.

But interceſſion is, in a more eſpecial manner, in ſcripture aſcribed to the prieſthood. It is the duty of all good men to intercede for their fellow-creatures: and we are even to *intercede for our enemies*; *to pray for them that hate us and deſpitefully uſe us* [i]: this is the general duty of all chriſtians for their fellow-creatures. But interceſſion is more eſpecially aſcribed to the prieſthood: ſo it was under the law. There was an annual day of atonement appointed when the ſacrifice was to be burnt without the camp, and the blood ſprinkled before the mercy-ſeat; when the high prieſt went into the holy of holies [k]. By comparing this with the new teſtament, eſpecially this epiſtle to the Hebrews, you will find this was a type of our Saviour's interceſſion. And tho our Lord may be ſaid to have interceded upon earth, when he prayed for his diſciples, and for his enemies upon the croſs; yet the proper time of his interceſſion, as a prieſt, was after his aſcenſion to the right hand of God: for interceſſion belongs to the glorious part of his prieſtly office. Now 'tis plain, that the apoſtle, in this epiſtle, alludes to this annual day of atonement, and the interceſſion performed then: *For Chriſt*, ſays he, *is not*

[i] Mat. 5. 44. [k] Lev. 16.

entred

entred into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itſelf, now to appear in the preſence of God for us [l]. He is not entred into the holy of holies, into which the high prieſt under the law entred; but he is entred into heaven itſelf: for that *holy of holies* was a figure of heaven, the true holy place; and he is entred there, to appear in the preſence of God for us. *Nor yet that he ſhould offer himſelf often, as the high prieſt entreth into the holy place every year with blood of others* [m]: it was not ſo; but *once for all he entred into the holy place: For then*, ſays the apoſtle, *muſt he often have ſuffered ſince the foundation of the world; but now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf*, &c. Thoſe prieſts came out of the holy place again the ſame day they went in; and, after having interceded, there was need to repeat the ſacrifices, and their interceſſion every year upon the ſame day of atonement. But our Lord has offered but one ſacrifice, which was ſufficient to expiate our guilt; and is entred into heaven to intercede for us, and there lives till he *comes without ſin unto ſalvation* [n], to ſave thoſe whoſe guilt he has expiated by his one oblation. And in the 10th chapter of this epiſtle, at the beginning, ſays the apoſtle: *For the law having a ſhadow of good things to*

[l] Heb. 9. 24.
[m] Ver. 25.
[n] Ver. 28.

come, and not the very image of the things, can never, by thoſe ſacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. Such as came to God by thoſe high prieſts, could not be made perfect but with reference to the Meſſiah, who was to be revealed: *For then would they not have ceaſed to have been offered, becauſe the worſhippers, once purged, would have had no more conſcience of ſins; but in thoſe ſacrifices there is a remembrance made again of ſins every year,* &c. But then compare this with the 11th and 12th verſes: for hereby the author of this epiſtle ſhews the perfection of Chriſt's ſacrifice. *And every prieſt ſtandeth daily miniſtring, and offering oftentimes the ſame ſacrifices, which can never take away ſins: but this man, after he had offered one ſacrifice for ſins, for ever ſat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting, till his enemies be made his footſtool.* So that 'tis plain, his ſitting down at the right hand of God, where *he ever lives to make interceſſion for us,* is conſequent upon his ſacrifice. Thus the prieſts under the law are ſaid to have made interceſſion, as types of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour. The ſame terms are uſed to ſignify their interceſſion, which was after the ſacrifice; and which ſhewed that God was reconcileable, that he had accepted the ſacrifice: for his wrath muſt be appeaſed, to make way for this work of interceſſion.

But

But then again: As this belongs to the prieſthood, and particularly to our bleſſed Lord and Saviour's prieſthood, which is infinitely ſuperior to that of Aaron; ſo we find, Rom. 8. 33, 34. this matter is expreſly ſpoken of: *Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth? it is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.* When the apoſtle had aſſured *thoſe that come to God by Chriſt*, thoſe who believe in him, of their ſecurity, in regard of their ſalvation, *Who is he that condemneth?* ſays he, *it is Chriſt that died*; that is, offered a meritorious ſacrifice: *yea, rather that is riſen again*; which is another argument for our hope: for his being riſen from the dead, ſhews the efficacy of his ſacrifice, ſeeing he was acquitted from the grave; and not only ſo, but being aſcended, *is at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us*; that he may *guide us by his counſel, till he bring us to his glory.* So that 'tis plain, the interceſſion of our Saviour, properly ſpeaking, as a prieſt, is conſequent upon his ſacrifice, after his reſurrection and aſcenſion, and belongs to his glorious ſtate. So 1 John 2. 1. *If any man ſin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous.* This ſame perſon makes a preſentation and plea of his blood, and is our advocate in heaven. Now is the time of his advocateſhip, ſince

he is riſen from the dead, and aſcended thither. And Rev. 8. 3. we read, that *another angel came and ſtood at the altar, having a golden cenſer; and there was given unto him much incenſe, that he ſhould offer it with the prayers of all ſaints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne.* Our bleſſed Lord is called an *angel*, or *meſſenger*, as the word ſignifies; a *meſſenger of the covenant* [o]: and expoſitors generally agree, that our Lord Jeſus is here repreſented as offering up the prayers of the people thro' the incenſe of his merit, to obtain the bleſſings they ask at his hands; becauſe he is repreſented here as a prieſt: and we know who is the high prieſt of our profeſſion; and, 'its very plain, that an alluſion is made to the incenſe taken from the golden altar under the law. In the 53d of Iſaiah, which is one of the moſt celebrated prophecies of our Lord's ſuffering, and ſhews what a ſacrifice he offered for us, when he was *wounded for our tranſgreſſions, and bruiſed for our ſins*; 'tis ſaid, *By his knowledge ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtify many; for he ſhall bear their iniquities, and he ſhall make interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors.* He was not only to be wounded for their ſins, but to make interceſſion for them.

'T'is true, that this term of interceſſion is alſo uſed concerning the holy Spirit: Rom. 8. 26. *Likewiſe the Spirit alſo helpeth our infir-*

[o] Mal. 3. 1.

mities;

mities; for we know not what we ſhould pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itſelf maketh interceſſion for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. We muſt have a diſtinct notion of the interceſſion of the holy Spirit, and of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; for the interceſſion of our Saviour is the interceſſion of a high prieſt: and there is an alluſion to what was done in the old teſtament upon the day of atonement. And as there is therefore a different notion given us of the work and office of the holy Spirit; ſo his interceſſion for us is to be conſidered after another manner. It is the part of an interceſſor to aſſiſt the perſon who is not ſo likely to prevail, without being introduced by another who has an intereſt in the perſon whoſe favour he asks. And on this account the holy Spirit may be ſaid to *intercede for us*, becauſe he aſſiſts us, and excites in us ſuch petitions as are proper for us to ask of God; and ſuch a frame of ſpirit as is proper to thoſe petitions: and ſo the apoſtle ſpeaks of *the Spirit's interceding for us.* But in this ſame chapter he ſpeaks of the interceſſion of our Lord, as conſequent upon his death: and, as the prieſtly office is aſcribed to Chriſt, and not to the holy Spirit; we muſt conſider his interceſſion as that which is agreeable to the prieſthood.

Sometimes again, interceſſion is uſed *for* a perſon, and ſometimes *againſt* a perſon, praying againſt another, or calling for vengeance upon another, as ſome of the pro-

phets have done, is call'd in ſcripture interceſſion: Rom. 11. 2, 3. *God hath not caſt away his people, which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the ſcripture ſaith of Elias? how he maketh interceſſion to God againſt Iſrael, ſaying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they ſeek my life.* Thus you ſee, when he complains againſt them, and prays that God would ſome way or other remarkably puniſh them, he is ſaid to intercede againſt them. So Acts 25. 24. *And Feſtus ſaid, King Agrippa, and all men which are here preſent with us, ye ſee this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me*; or, as it is in the original, have *interceded with me* [p]; *both at Jeruſalem and here*, &c. This is interpoſing againſt a man: ſo that you ſee the word interceſſion is uſed in this general manner, either to pray for or againſt another. But when it is ſpoken of with reference to men, in ſcripture 'tis moſt commonly uſed to ſignify the prayers of good men to God in behalf of their fellow-creatures. When 'tis uſed concerning the Spirit, it ſignifies his aſſiſtance of us in our prayers. When 'tis uſed of the prieſtly office, eſpecially in the new teſtament, it ſignifies ſomething more and different from what it does in other reſpects. There was a particular time when the high prieſt interceded for the people, namely, the day of atonement; and there

[p] Ἐντυχόν μοι.

was

was a particular place, in the holy of holies. The time of our Lord's interceſſion is ſince his aſcenſion into heaven; the place of it is heaven itſelf; the manner of it is by preſenting himſelf to the Father in our nature: this divine perſon, having aſſumed our nature, after having died upon the croſs, raiſes himſelf from the dead, and aſcends into heaven in the ſame nature, and appears before God for us. And thus as our bleſſed Saviour appears there himſelf, ſo he repreſents his people; as in the 6th of this epiſtle to the Hebrews, *ver.* 20. *Whither the fore-runner is for us entred; even Jeſus, made a high prieſt for ever after the order of Melchizedec.* He is entred there as a prieſt within the veil, into the higheſt heavens: he is entred there as our fore-runner; that is, to aſſure us that *where he is, we ſhall,* in due time, *alſo be.* And if he is entred as our fore-runner, it is as our repreſentative. So that he appears there himſelf, and appears on our account, as the repreſentative of his people.

It imports, as I have explained to you alſo, the plea of his blood, as he intercedes and negotiates our concerns in heaven. The Revelation of John informs us in what manner he doth it: *And I beheld, and lo, in the midſt of the throne, and of the four beaſts, and in the midſt of the elders ſtood a Lamb, as it had been ſlain* [q]: to ſignify that our bleſſed Lord, tho he ever lives, yet he makes a plea of his

[q] Rev. 5. 6.

ſacrifice; and ſo is repreſented in heaven as *a lamb that had been ſlain.* This is, as I ſaid before, typified by the high prieſt ſprinkling the blood of the ſacrifice before the mercy-ſeat. 'Tis by the plea of his blood that we are juſtified; according to that in Rom. 8. *It is God that juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth? it is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again. He is riſen again for our juſtification*; and ſo *ever lives to make interceſſion for us.* Our juſtification is indeed owing to the merit of his ſacrifice; but then this merit muſt be pleaded.

And, farther, his interceſſion imports the defence and preſervation of his church: *For as we are reconciled to God by the death of his Son; how much more, being reconciled, ſhall we be ſaved by his life*[r]? What life is that? Why, the life of one who intercedes for us: for he ever lives to this purpoſe. *I am he that was dead and am alive, and behold I live for evermore; and have the keys of hell and death*[f]: have all power in my hand, and can preſerve men ſafe to my heavenly kingdom. Therefore when *we come to God by Chriſt*, as an interceſſor, we come by one who can defend and preſerve us: and being *reconciled by his death, we ſhall be ſaved by his life*; and may therefore, in all our wants, apply ourſelves to him, and *come boldly to the*

[r] Rom. 5. 10. [f] Rev. 1. 18.

throne

throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need [s].

The office of interceſſor may alſo ſuppoſe his engaging for the preſervation of his people, for *thoſe that come to God by him*; becauſe 'tis not enough that they have entred into covenant with God upon gracious and favourable terms, but they muſt continue ſtedfaſt in his covenant: and thus thoſe who have *made a covenant with him by ſacrifice*, as we have done on the account of the ſacrifice of our bleſſed Saviour, muſt be preſerved by his grace. Therefore the apoſtle Jude gives him the character of *him that is able to keep us from falling* [t]. We are to ſuppoſe that he has engaged himſelf on the behalf of his people; and, as *none can pluck them out of his Father's hand* [u], ſo none can pluck them out of his, who is become their ſurety, as he is mediator, and as he is interceſſor: he engages on the part of his Father, and communicates all grace to them.

And then, in the laſt place, as I have ſhewn you already, it imports the preſentation of their ſervices and of their perſons too; according to that in Rev. 8. 3. *Their prayers are offered up with much incenſe:* they are preſented by him, and they are accepted of God in the beloved. Our Saviour tells his diſciples, in one of his laſt diſcourſes with them, that it was *expedient for them that he*

[s] Heb. 4. 16.
[t] Jude 24.
[u] John 10. 29.

ſhould

ſhould go away, that he ſhould aſcend into heaven; the conſequence of which would be *the ſending another comforter* [v], or another *advocate*, as the word might be rendered [w]. He would give them the holy Spirit, and himſelf would pray for them; that is, he would intercede for them in heaven. We muſt not ſuppoſe it was after the manner he did here upon earth, when he proſtrated himſelf upon the ground, and *offered up prayers and ſupplications, with ſtrong crying and tears unto God* [x]: no; our interceſſor is now repreſented upon a throne, and intercedes by his conſtant appearance before God; preſents himſelf as a lamb once ſlain; and as having, by this ſacrifice, merited the divine favour for his people, he preſents their perſons and ſervices to God in ſuch a manner as renders them acceptable to him.

Thus have I ſhewn you what is ſignified by our Saviour's interceſſion.

2. We are to conſider the neceſſity of it. And that will be eaſily diſcerned, if we recollect what has been ſaid of this matter.

(1.) Becauſe it belongs to his prieſtly office. Every part of the prieſtly function muſt, of neceſſity, have been performed by him: for, as our apoſtle ſays, *Every high prieſt is ordained to offer gifts and ſacrifices: wherefore it is of neceſſity, that this man have ſomewhat*

[v] John 16. 7.
[w] Παρακλητος. Vid. John 2. 1.
[x] Heb. 5. 7.

alſo to offer [y]. It was neceſſary for our high prieſt to have a ſacrifice too. The ſame may be ſaid concerning interceſſion: if this was a neceſſary part of the prieſtly office, it was neceſſary our high prieſt ſhould be an interceſſor. If he had remained upon earth, he would not have been a perfect prieſt; for then he would have only performed that part of his office which conſiſted in offering ſacrifice: but his entring into heaven, ſhews the perfection of his prieſthood. So that if we conceive of our Saviour as a prieſt, we muſt conſider his interceſſion as a part of his prieſtly office; and not, as ſome perſons pretend, as belonging to his kingly office. Indeed it is no wonder, that thoſe who deny the neceſſity of his prieſtly office as a ſatisfactory ſacrifice to divine juſtice, deny his interceſſion as a prieſt too. But I need not ſtand to refute this, when I have ſo plainly proved from ſcripture, that the interceſſion of Chriſt is a part of his prieſtly office: ſo that if it be neceſſary he ſhould be a perfect prieſt, it is neceſſary he ſhould intercede.

(2.) This appears neceſſary for the application of that blood which he ſacrificed upon the croſs. It was neceſſary for him in regard of his character, that he ſhould be a perfect prieſt; and it was neceſſary for us, becauſe his blood muſt be applied to our conſciences, and it muſt be pleaded before the throne of God. Our Saviour offered a ſacrifice which

[y] Heb. 8. 3.

was

was ſatisfactory; but then this muſt be pleaded. This was typically repreſented under the law by the ſprinkling of the blood before the mercy-ſeat. And in ſome caſes of legal purification, they were not deemed to be accepted till they were ſprinkled with the blood of the ſacrifice: and ſo muſt we, by the interpoſition of our Saviour; by his interceſſion for us we muſt have his blood applied to our ſouls: for, as an interceſſor, he ſprinkles it before the mercy-ſeat, and applies to us that great benefit and favour; ſo that we are effectually juſtified.

(3.) And then, by what you have heard of his obtaining bleſſings for us; this was neceſſary for our preſervation and ſupport in the preſent imperfect ſtate. For, as I told you before, it was neceſſary for the expiation of our guilt that he ſhould die; and it is neceſſary he ſhould live to intercede, that we might be preſerved. And this is to fortify the ſouls of his people, who are ſurrounded with ſo many temptations in this world: this is a doctrine which tends mightily to their comfort, and therefore ſeems neceſſary for them in the ſtate of their pilgrimage; that tho they are weak, *they know that their Redeemer lives* [z], and is *mighty to ſave* [a]; *able to ſave to the uttermoſt thoſe that come to God by him:* that tho Satan attack them with a great deal of artifice, yet the ſhepherd of

[z] Job 19. 25. | [a] Iſa. 63. 1.

Iſrael

Iſrael *never ſlumbers nor ſleeps; and greater is he that is in them, than he that is in the world* [b]: that when they are tempted, they have an interceſſor at the right hand of God, who knows all things, and therefore knows their ſouls in adverſity; and is intimately acquainted with all their diſtreſſes: that when they are tempted, they have one at the right hand of God, who *knows how to ſuccour them that are tempted; and will, with the temptation, make a way for their eſcape, and will render them able to bear it* [c]. You ſee how neceſſary this doctrine appears for the conſolation of the people of God: and thus our Saviour makes uſe of this argument, to perſuade his diſciples that they ſhould be content with his abſence from earth, becauſe his preſence in heaven would be more for their advantage; ſeeing there he would intercede in their behalf, and procure ſuch benefits for them [d]. And thus ſays the apoſtle in the Revelation: *I heard a loud voice ſaying in heaven, Now is come ſalvation and ſtrength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Chriſt: for the accuſer of our brethren is caſt down, who accuſed them before our God day and night* [e]. 'Tis the power of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as he is now an interceſſor, which adminiſters ſtrong conſolation to his people. The devil is called *an accuſer:* it is a forenſick term. Our Lord is *an interceſſor*, in oppoſition to

[b] 1 John 4. 4.
[c] 1 Cor. 10. 13.
[d] John 14.
[e] Rev. 12. 10.

Satan, who is *the accuſer of the brethren: and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb* [f], and the effectual plea which he makes in interceding with the Father. So that you ſee, upon theſe ſeveral accounts, 'tis neceſſary that our bleſſed Lord and Saviour ſhould intercede for us.

II. The next thing to be conſidered, is the *perpetuity* and the *continuance* of Chriſt's interceſſion. It is aſſerted, that *he ever lives to intercede for us.* This is to ſhew,

1. The dignity of our high prieſt, and the excellency of his ſacrifice. For the high prieſts under the law did not ever live to make interceſſion; *for they were many, by reaſon of death* [g]: but *he that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore* [h]. It does not only ſignify our Lord's power, that he is truly God, and raiſed himſelf from the dead; but it ſignifies the efficacy of his ſacrifice, becauſe the bands of death could not hold him. And thus, on the one hand, it ſhews the dignity of his prieſthood, *that he ever lives:* for, as they die, *he is a prieſt for ever, after the power of an endleſs life* [i]; ſo, on the other, it diſcovers the perfection of his ſacrifice too.

Again: he muſt ever live to take away the ſcandal of the croſs. It was a great humiliation of our bleſſed Saviour, that he would

[f] Rev. 12. 11.
[g] Heb. 7. 23.
[h] Rev. 1. 18.
[i] Heb. 7. 16.

die

die for our offences: and it is not conceivable how he could be humbled more than he was, ſeeing he endured ſo many agonies, ſo many ſorrows and torments; and, at laſt, death itſelf. And now it was fit, that as he humbled himſelf, *he ſhould be highly exalted, and that at his name every knee ſhould bow* [k]; bow to the Father in his name, or *come to God by him*, as the great interceſſor: for this is a part of his exaltation at the right hand of God; this is the great dignity and glory of his prieſtly office. Men were offended at him, ſtumbled at his doctrine, and thought meanly concerning his perſon, becauſe he died upon the croſs; but they did not conſider that he died as a ſacrifice, and that by his blood he could make atonement: but now that he is at the right hand of God, this may well take away the reproach of his croſs; for in proportion to his humiliation, ſo is he exalted: and, if men conſider it right, his ſacrifice was neceſſary in order to this interceſſion; and therefore the ſcandal of that may be well reſcued hereby. Again,

2. The perpetuity of our Lord's interceſſion, is to ſhew that he is the model of our reſurrection and of our glorification. We are formed upon this model; *our vile bodies*, at the reſurrection, *will be faſhioned like to his glorious body* [l]. *We ſhall ſee him as he is, and ſhall be like him* [m]. Surprizing grace! that

[k] Phil. 2. 9, 10.
[l] *Chap.* 3. 21.
[m] 1 John 3. 2.

we

we ſhould be advanced to a reſemblance of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour. And ſeeing he *ever lives to intercede for us*, this is a conſtant aſſurance that we ſhall *ever be with the Lord* [n], in the continual enjoyment of the privileges and glory of that bleſſed ſtate. His *ever living*, ſhews the conſtancy of his negotiations: our Lord does not only at certain times preſent himſelf, but he conſtantly negotiates; he never diſcontinues this great buſineſs, this mighty affair, about which he is gone into the ſtate of glory. There is no occaſion to doubt of his watching over his people for good; he knows all their wants, and conſiders all their infirmities, and takes notice of all their difficulties and temptations. It coſts him no pain, no ſorrow to intercede, tho it did to offer himſelf a ſacrifice: and ſeeing he makes a conſtant preſentation of himſelf to the Father, there is hope in all our addreſſes to him. And,

3. He muſt conſtantly intercede for us, that he may be a conſtant ſource of our communion with God. Our ſpiritual life conſiſts in our union with God: now, as we are not able, of ourſelves, to ſupport ourſelves in ſuch a privilege as this is, our bleſſed Lord ſuſtains us in it; he is the principle of our communion with God. It is thro' him that we derive all favours from the Father; it is thro' him that we continue in the love of God. He receives benefits to confer upon us,

[n] 1 Theſſ. 4. 17.

as

as our interceſſor, and *ſheds abroad the love of God in our hearts* [o]; and he excites love in our ſouls to God, and preſents our ſervices to him, which are too imperfect to be accepted, but upon account of the interpoſition of ſuch an interceſſor.

III. The laſt thing, is to ſhew you, in a few words, the force of the apoſtle's argument: that *he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt, thoſe that come to God by him*; *ſeeing he ever lives to make interceſſion for them.* And who can doubt of this, that conſiders the nature and extent of our Saviour's interceſſion? What is there to be imagined that we can want *to ſave us to the uttermoſt*, but what we find in the character of our bleſſed Redeemer? He has ſacrificed himſelf before, and that part is done. And now, ſeeing he is an interceſſor; ſurely this character, if duly conſidered, is capable of giving us ſtrong conſolation, and good hope thro' grace. There is no danger, no difficulty, no ſnare, no temptation, which can occur to us, but you ſee our Lord watches over us, to deliver us from the power of it. There is no ſervice we can preſent to God, but is accepted: *He offers up the prayers of all ſaints with much incenſe* [p]. God has infinite majeſty; and how can we appear before him? This interceſſor tempers the rays of the divine ma-

[o] Rom. 5. 5.

[p] Rev. 8. 3.

jeſty, ſo that we can *ſee God* by faith, *and live* [q]; *ſee him who is inviſible* [r]; can approach him who is infinitely juſt, thro' the interceſſion of one who pleads his atoning blood, his perfect righteouſneſs before the throne of God. Thro' our Saviour we can preſent ourſelves to the Father with acceptance; he is *bone of our bone, and fleſh of our fleſh:* ſo that whatever might diſcourage us, is removed out of the way; and, we may believe, that he is able and willing to *ſave* us *to the uttermoſt*, ſince he is our interceſſor. If he had continued in a ſtate of humiliation, we might have doubted whether he could have *ſaved* us *to the uttermoſt:* but ſeeing *he is exalted above all principalities and powers, and is ſeated at the right hand of God*; ſeeing he is there our mediator, what can diſcourage us? Let us therefore *come with boldneſs to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in the time of need* [t]; ſeeing we have an interceſſor there, who is, in all reſpects, ſo well qualified.

I will offer two or three reflections on what I have ſaid, and conclude.

1. Thoſe who have been hitherto at a diſtance from God, and are now willing to come and be reconciled to him, may ſee the only way of approach. They muſt come by Jeſus Chriſt, and in conſideration of his

[q] Exod. 33. 20.
[r] Heb. 11. 27.
[t] Heb. 4. 16.

ſacrifice

ſacrifice: they muſt come after the manner which has been explained; and then the character of an interceſſor will give them unſpeakable conſolation.

2. As for thoſe who have thus come to God by Jeſus Chriſt; why ſhould they deſpond and droop, ſeeing their great interceſſor is ſo well qualified to negotiate their affairs? There is no opportunity he miſſes of doing them good; there is no difficulty but he can ſurmount, no wants but he can ſupply: and, as he is the principle of our communion with God, we ſhould addreſs ourſelves with a holy confidence in the divine mercy. Seeing we have an interceſſor ſo well qualified, it ſhould encourage our faith; and the faith which is preſcribed us, does not hinder that reverence which is due to the divine majeſty.

To conclude: let us improve this privilege and delight in the ſacred worſhip of God, both in private and publick; ſeeing, by this means, we have communion with him thro' Jeſus Chriſt, who is the great mediator of the new teſtament, and *ever lives to make interceſſion for us.*

SERMON IX.

Preach'd at *PINNERS-HALL*, Nov. 8, 1707.

MATT. xi. 11, 12.

Verily I ſay unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not riſen a greater than John the baptiſt: notwithſtanding, he that is leaſt in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he. And from the days of John the baptiſt, until now, the kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

The firſt SERMON on this text.

IT ſeems probable, by what we find in the beginning of this chapter, that John the baptiſt being in priſon, his diſciples inquired of him concerning the doctrine he had preached, relating to the true Meſſiah; wherein he had declared, that Jeſus of Nazareth was the perſon: they would now again know of him, *whether this was he that ſhould come, or whether they were to look for*

for another? Upon which John ſends them to our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, for full ſatisfaction: Chriſt appeals to the miracles he had wrought, ſo as to give them occaſion to make a judgment themſelves, whether he were the perſon or not, who was predicted. He does not tell them, in plain terms, that he was the Meſſiah; but he tells them what miracles were wrought, ſome of which they themſelves were eye-witneſſes of [s], and directs them to report theſe things to John the baptiſt: *The blind receive their ſight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raiſed up, and the poor have the goſpel preached to them. And bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me* [t].

There are indeed ſome who reckon that John the baptiſt being in priſon, began himſelf to doubt of the miſſion of Jeſus Chriſt; and that therefore he ſent two of his diſciples to inquire, for his own ſatisfaction. But this does not certainly appear from the context; and therefore, 'tis moſt probable, that the deſign of John the baptiſt, in ſending theſe two diſciples, was, that they might ſatisfy themſelves, as well as the reſt of his followers, who were in doubt concerning the Meſſiah. Their expectations were diſappointed, in that he had not ſet up a pompous and temporal kingdom in the world;

[s] Luke 7. 21. | [t] Mat. 11. 5, 6.

and therefore they queſtioned whether he were really the Chriſt: upon which John very prudently ſends them to our Lord himſelf, for a fuller confirmation. And Chriſt gives this anſwer; intimating, that when they gave John an account of the miracles which were wrought, he would from thence ſatisfy and confirm them in the belief of his miſſion, if they were willing to receive the truth, and the doctrine he had before preached. For it is not very likely that John ſhould now doubt concerning a perſon of whom he had ſo clear an information, and to whom he had given ſo publick a teſtimony.

'Tis true, 'tis afterwards ſaid by our Saviour to the multitudes concerning John, *What went ye out for to ſee? a reed ſhaken with the wind*[u]? And ſome think our Saviour here, after an allegorical manner, repreſents John's weakneſs; and that he takes occaſion from this meſſage, ſent by John, to obſerve, that tho he was a great prophet, yet he was but an impotent man, *a reed ſhaken with the wind*, now he was under temptation. But there is no juſt reaſon, that I know of, ſo to interpret the text: and we muſt be cautious of uſing allegories, when there is no neceſſity for them. *What went you out into the wilderneſs to ſee?* I rather think it is as much as if our Lord had ſaid: "Do you know what perſon you went "to ſee? When you attended on the mi-

[u] Mat. 11. 7.

"niſtry

" niſtry of John, you did not go out in ſuch " crouds and numbers for nothing; it was " not *to ſee the reeds ſhaken with the wind* on " the coaſts of Jordan: you went to ſee " ſomething elſe; your curioſity was excited " by ſomething you had heard of him." *But what went you out for to ſee? a man clothed in ſoft raiment?* " Did you go out " to ſee a man who was to proclaim a tem- " poral kingdom, habited like a courtier, " like a perſon of great authority? No; " you had nothing of this kind to incite your " curioſity." *Behold they that wear ſoft clothing, are in kings houſes. But what went you out for to ſee then? a prophet?* " Is this the " truth of the matter? Did this move you " to go into the wilderneſs? You had heard " there was a prophet there." And 'tis no wonder that this was the current report of him: for he indeed was clothed like a prophet, like Elias of old, clothed with rough garments; and lived an auſtere life, agreeable to the doctrine of repentance which he was to preach. *What went you out for to ſee? a prophet? Yea, I ſay unto you, and more than a prophet.* " Something *more* " *excellent* than a prophet, as 'tis in the " Greek [v]; ſomething which exceeded a " prophet." *For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I ſend my meſſenger before thy face, which ſhall prepare thy way before thee.* " This is he of whom the prophet

[v] Περισσότερον προφήτου.

" Malachi thus ſpeaks [w]." Then follows our text: *Verily I ſay unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not riſen a greater than John the baptiſt*, &c.

There is ſomething very important and conſiderable in theſe words of our Saviour; as appears by his prefacing of them with a *Verily I ſay unto you.* For, when our Lord would awaken the attention of the people after an extraordinary manner; when he had ſomething of the utmoſt conſequence to deliver to them, and would diſengage their minds from any ſtrong prejudice againſt it, he uſes to begin with this preface, *Verily I ſay unto you.* Nor does he content himſelf with this; but having added, in the 13th verſe, *For all the prophets and the law propheſied until John*; he engages them to reflect upon what he ſaid with great deliberation. Says he: *And, if you will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.* " If you can " receive a truth of ſo great conſequence, " and which I affirm to you after this ſo- " lemn manner, *this is Elias, that was to* " *come.*" *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.* Another expreſſion to engage them to a ſerious conſideration of what he had been ſpeaking: which is likewiſe uſed in the meſſage delivered to the ſeven churches of Aſia by John the evangeliſt; *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the churches.* As much as to ſay; " This

[w] Mal. 3. 1.

" concerns

" concerns every man, whoever is capable " of underſtanding and reflecting upon what " is ſaid: let every ſuch perſon give atten- " tion to this doctrine, which is of great " conſequence, in order to underſtand the " divine will."

In the words of the text, in general, you have theſe three things.

I. The character of John the baptiſt given by our Lord: *Among them that are born of women, there hath not riſen a greater than John the baptiſt.*

II. The character of the diſciples of our bleſſed Saviour, preferred to that of John: *Notwithſtanding, he that is leaſt in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he.*

III. A deſcription of the ſtate of things, from the miniſtry of John, until the time when our bleſſed Saviour uttered theſe words; an account of the ſtate of things in the land of Judea, where both John the baptiſt and Chriſt himſelf miniſtred: *From the days of John the baptiſt, until now, the kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

I. We have the character of John the baptiſt: *Verily I ſay unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not riſen a greater than John the baptiſt.* This is agreeable

able to what our Saviour had ſaid a little before, when he affirmed *he was more than a prophet* [x]; or, *more excellent* than a prophet. Comparing theſe things together, our Lord's meaning appears to be, that *among thoſe who were born of women, there was no prophet greater than John the baptiſt.* And this is ſpoken by a meioſis; our Saviour ſpeaks leſs than he means. He ſays, *He was more than a prophet*; and his meaning is, that he exceeded other prophets who went before him: not only that there was no prophet greater than he, but John was greater than any prophet who went before him. *Yea, I ſay unto you, more than a prophet*; or, more excellent than a prophet.

Here 'tis proper we ſhould conſider,

1. The title which is given to this perſon in the ſcripture: he is called *John the baptiſt.*

2. His office as *a prophet.*

3. His permanent character. He was ſo great a prophet, that *none, who were born among women, were greater: nay*, he was *more than a prophet*; greater than thoſe who preceded him.

1. His title; *John the baptiſt.* There is an account given concerning this perſon, by divers of the evangeliſts. In the 1ſt of Luke you have an account of his birth, and of the

[x] Mat. 11. 9.

circum-

circumſtances of it. An angel appeared to his father Zecharias, as he waited in his turn at the temple, and diſcovered to him what an extraordinary perſon ſhould be born of his wife; giving him a particular account of his character. He was not ready to believe this; and was taken dumb, and continued ſo till the child was born. And you find ſeveral other extraordinary occurrences previous to his birth. When the bleſſed virgin receives a meſſage from heaven likewiſe, concerning the birth of our bleſſed Saviour, ſhe makes a viſit to Elizabeth, the mother of John the baptiſt [y]; and, upon that occaſion, is inſpired in an extraordinary manner, and propheſies. And, in the goſpel of John, you have this character given of the baptiſt: *There was a man ſent from God, whoſe name was John. The ſame came for a witneſs, to bear witneſs of the light, that all men thro' him might believe* [z]. And we are farther told, *John bare witneſs of him; and cried, ſaying, This was he of whom I ſpake, He that cometh after me, is preferred before me; for he was before me. And of his fulneſs have all we received, and grace for grace* [a], &c. You have an account of him from Matthew, in divers places; which ſhew the manner of his life, and the miniſtry to which he was called.

[y] Luke 1. 40.
[z] John 1. 6, 7.
[a] Ver. 15, 16.

He

He was named *John* by divine appointment: for so was the message of the angel to Zecharias, *that his name should be called John* [b]; and so he ordered at the time of his birth. The meaning of it is *gracious*; and it might not only signify that he was graciously given to his parents, at an age when they despaired of a child, but that he was the fore-runner of our Saviour, and was *to preach the grace of the gospel* [c], and to shew men that *the kingdom of heaven was at hand.*

He was called *the baptist*, because he was *sent of God to baptize*; as himself declares: *He that sent me to baptize, said unto me, He upon whom the holy Spirit shall descend as a dove, the same is he* [d]. This was the character whereby he should know the Messiah. John the baptist was *sent* both *to preach and to baptize:* and accordingly we find in his history, that *great multitudes came to him into the wilderness of Judea, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins* [e]. But he rejected those who did not appear to be penitent: for the Scribes and Pharisees coming to him, he said to them, *Ye generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say, you have Abraham to your father* [f]. "This does not intitle you to baptism; you

[b] Luke 1. 13.
[c] Mat. 3. 1, 5, 6.
[d] John 1. 33.
[e] Acts 20. 24.
[f] Ver. 7, 8, 9.

"must

" must *bring forth fruits meet for repen-*
" *tance.*"

Some indeed have imagined, that John took up baptism because this was a custom usual amongst the Jews, as 'tis pretended; and that they baptized people who were proselyted to their religion; that the proselytes were initiated by circumcision, by baptism, and by sacrifice. But it does not appear, from any law of God, that ever he ordained that proselytes, that is, such as were persuaded to embrace the Jewish religion, should be baptized: and therefore, if the Jews had such a custom among them, it was of their own invention. And 'tis not likely John the baptist, or our Saviour, would countenance any innovation of theirs contrary to the word of God. John came to recover them from their superstitions: and our Saviour says, that *they had made the commandment of God of none effect by their traditions; and that in vain they worshipped him, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men* [g]. Besides, the Rabbies of the Jews are not agreed among themselves, whether 'twas necessary to use such a ceremony as this in the initiating a proselyte, or not: and there are none of them whose authority is authentick to us. They are later writers for a considerable time, than those who wrote the gospel of our blessed Saviour; and therefore we have no reason to believe the Rabbies concerning this matter: at least

[g] Mat. 15. 6, 9.

we have no reaſon to believe that our Saviour, or John the baptiſt, would have approved of this, if it had been a tradition of theirs.

And 'tis not likely that John would be called *the baptiſt*, this ſignifying his character, if he only took up a cuſtom which was in uſe before. He was a prieſt by his birth, and a prophet by his office; and is called *John the baptiſt* becauſe of this ordinance of baptiſm, which he adminiſtred: which would not have been his diſtinguiſhing title, if it had been common for the prieſts to baptize proſelytes. Why ſhould he be called *baptiſt* more than others of them? Beſides, he declares, that *God ſent him to baptize*[h]: and they could not deny but *his baptiſm was from heaven*[i]. Why then, ſhould any imagine, he took it from any tradition of the Jews? Our bleſſed Lord ſufficiently confirms this, that his baptiſm was from heaven, in that he ſubmitted to it himſelf. And he who ſpeaks ſo much againſt human inventions, would never have countenanced this of John, if it had not been a divine ordinance. His baptiſm was *from heaven, and not from men*: and we find great numbers were baptized by him, as was our bleſſed Saviour himſelf.

2. As to his character as *a prophet*, we find 'tis neceſſary to conclude he was ſuch an one, becauſe our Saviour ſays, he was *more than a*

[h] John 1. 33. [i] Mat. 21. 25.

prophet.

prophet. And 'tis certain he propheſied. He foretold the kingdom of the Meſſiah, declared it was ready at hand: he foretold his own diminution, and the increaſe and progreſs of the honour and of the kingdom of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; *he muſt increaſe*, ſays he, *but I muſt decreaſe* [k]: he foretold to the Jews what deſtruction would befal them, and what a terrible ſtate they would be reduced to, if they did not hearken to the doctrine of repentance: *The axe is laid to the root of the tree* [l]; as if he ſhould ſay, your deſtruction is near at hand, if you do not now repent: he told them, that *God would winnow his floor; the wheat ſhould be preſerved and gathered, but the chaff ſhould be caſt into unquenchable fire* [m]; that God had ſent his Son into the world, and he would come to refine and purify his church, and there would be a clear diſtinction made between the righteous and the wicked; there would be a reformation of things; and another ſort of a church muſt be planted in the world than theirs, which was ſo degenerate and corrupt. But,

3. This is not all: he was not only a prophet, but, *among thoſe that were born of women, there was none greater than he.* He was a *more excellent prophet*, as the word in the original ſignifies. Now this may ſeem ſtrange, that John the baptiſt ſhould be termed, by

[k] John 3. 30.
[l] Mat. 3. 10.
[m] Ver. 12.

our

our Saviour, as great a man as ever was born into the world; nay, be preferred to all the prophets who were before him: especially if we consider the things which follow.

'Tis true, John was a prophet in that he predicted things to come; and in that he taught, by an extraordinary mission, that men should repent, and accordingly baptized them: a new instituted ordinance was proclaimed by his means, and put in practice. But we have prophets in the old testament who did a great many miracles; whereas 'tis said of John, *he did no miracle.* He indeed *bare witness to the truth* [n]: he testified concerning the Messiah; but he did not perform any miracle to confirm his doctrine. As you see, John 10. 40, 41. where the evangelist, speaking of our Saviour, says: *He went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man, were true.* He predicted divers things, which we find to be true; but he did no miracle. Now this was an eminent character of the prophets under the old testament, that they wrought great miracles: and nothing could give them a greater veneration among the people, than to see them perform such wonderful works in the name of God. You know what a multitude of miracles were wrought by Moses, when he

[n] John 5. 33.

brought

brought the people of Iſrael out of Egypt. Before they removed from that ſtate of bondage, with how many wonderful ſigns, how many miraculous events, did he prove his miſſion? When he came into the wilderneſs, how was that whole nation engaged to attend to the divine law which was publiſhed by this great prophet, on the account of the miracles which attended his miniſtry; a conſtant ſeries of miracles for about forty years together? After this, God raiſed them up many prophets, who performed great miracles; and particularly Elias, who not only was extraordinary for his miracles, but alſo for his tranſlation into heaven. There were other prophets famous and eminent for the eſtabliſhment of the true religion in the world; but Moſes in a ſpecial manner: for God was pleaſed, by his means, to give a new inſtitution to the people of Iſrael, and to form them as a nation for himſelf; to govern them by his authority and laws, and to erect his worſhip after a particular manner, and with peculiar rites and ceremonies among them. And others of the prophets were eminent for reforming the people after they were degenerated, for reducing them from idols to ſerve and worſhip the true God; particularly Elias, who was enabled to perform great miracles, in order to turn the hearts of the people after this manner.

Other prophets were famous for the prophecies they wrote, for the extraordinary

diſcoveries which were given to them; and, in a ſpecial manner, concerning the coming of the Meſſiah and his kingdom. David, Iſaiah, Jeremiah, and others, were famous for this kind of prophecy: their writings are preſerved to us, and make up a conſiderable part of the ſcriptures of the old teſtament.

It may therefore be objected, How does it appear that John the baptiſt was *a greater prophet* than any of theſe; whereas, for miracles, he performed none? As for the inſtitution of a new religion, indeed John the baptiſt told them *the kingdom of heaven was at hand*[o]: but he lived under the Jewiſh œconomy; and tho he was the fore-runner of the Lord, yet he did not properly eſtabliſh a new religion in the world. 'Tis true, he brought one ordinance with him, and thereby aſſured the people there was to be introduced a conſiderable change of things: but however, as to the body and ſubſtance of the Moſaick œconomy, it yet remained under the miniſtry of John. Nor did he write any book that now makes up any part of the canon of ſcripture. We have his hiſtory, his doctrine, and life written by the evangeliſts; but himſelf has not written one book of the new teſtament, and therefore he may ſeem to be inferior to ſuch prophets whoſe viſions make up a part of the ſacred canon.

[o] Mat. 3. 2.

Nay, the objection may ſtill riſe higher: for it may be ask'd, How could John appear with that evidence and clearneſs to be *a prophet*, ſeeing *he did no miracle*; whereas other prophets, under the old teſtament, wrought many? I anſwer; that tho John did no miracle, yet 'twas very evident he was a prophet: he brought ſufficient credentials with him. And, farther; tho upon ſome particular accounts he may ſeem inferior to divers of the prophets, yet when things are duly conſidered, he appears to be a more excellent prophet than any of them.

I ſhall firſt treat concerning the evidence of his being a true prophet, tho he did no miracle. For there are various kinds and degrees of evidence. There is a ſufficient evidence that John was a prophet, tho he performed no miracle. There are two things which are the ſpecial evidences of a man's being a true prophet: the performance of miracles; and the accompliſhment of his predictions.

When ſuch wonderful things are performed, as are paſt the power of art or nature; when theſe have borne a ſtrict examination by unprejudiced perſons, here is a ſufficient evidence to teſtify a man to come from God. Or when a man predicts that ſuch and ſuch things ſhall come to paſs, and relates the circumſtances clearly, and the time of accompliſhment exactly; and the things are of ſuch a nature that they could not be known to

any but God, and thoſe to whom God ſhould reveal them; and when theſe predictions are in divers inſtances; why, reaſon ſhews, that the accompliſhment of them ſignifies the man to be a true prophet. And therefore there was a rule given, in the law of God, that prophecies ſhould be examined in this way [p]: not that I think it can reaſonably be ſuppoſed that ever God permitted any perſon, who would tempt others to idolatry, to be capable of performing a true miracle; but this direction was given in order to guard the people from impoſtors, who might do ſome things to amuſe inconſiderate men, and ſo turn them aſide from worſhipping the true God. The Jews would have the utmoſt reaſon to examine a man with the greateſt diligence and care, who ſhould endeavour to ſeduce them to idolatry, becauſe they had the ſtrongeſt evidence that 'twas contrary to the will of God, in that their religion was confirmed by a long ſucceſſion of miracles.

But, I ſay, tho John the baptiſt performed no miracle, yet he had ſufficient evidence to produce to the people that he was a prophet. The things which he predicted were accompliſhed; as they confeſſed in that forecited text in John 10. theſe things declared him to be a true prophet. *And many reſorted to him, and ſaid, John did no miracle: but all things that John ſpake of this man were true.* q. d. " He gave us a true character

[p] Deut. 18. 22.

" of

" of the Meſſiah; and we find his words " made good."

But then you'll ſay, How did the people know John was a prophet before any of his predictions came to paſs? for he no ſooner began to preach, but he was reverenced as ſuch, tho he performed no miracle.

1. I anſwer: There were ſeveral very miraculous and ſurprizing events which attended the production of this great prophet into the world. He was born of parents of ſuch an age as ſurpaſſed the courſe of nature: There was likewiſe the viſion of an angel, who appeared to Zecharias while in the temple; as you find in Luke 1. There was the teſtimony of the bleſſed virgin herſelf: and there was the prophecy of Elizabeth, the mother of John the baptiſt. Zecharias was ſtruck dumb, becauſe he disbelieved the meſſage of the angel concerning him; and his mouth was miraculouſly opened, and his ſpeech reſtored at the time of his birth. You find the angel propheſies of him, and tells his character. *The angel ſaid unto him, Fear not, Zecharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth ſhall bear thee a ſon, and thou ſhalt call his name John. And thou ſhalt have joy and gladneſs, and many ſhall rejoice at his birth. For he ſhall be great in the ſight of the Lord, and ſhall drink neither wine nor ſtrong drink: and he ſhall be filled with the holy Ghoſt, even from his mother's womb* [q]. Af-

[q] Luke 1. 13, 14, 15.

terwards you have an account of Elizabeth's conception: *Thus*, ſays ſhe, *hath the Lord dealt with me, in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men* [r]. Then you have an account of the meſſage to the bleſſed virgin, and her conception of our Lord; and afterwards of a viſit ſhe makes to Elizabeth, who was her couſin: and after this many prophecies concerning the great things which belong to Chriſt's coming into the world. Here was a conſiderable number of events which might diſpoſe the minds of the people to hearken to John as a great prophet. Here were various revelations and viſions concerning him: he was produced contrary to all expectation, and above the courſe of nature: here was a miracle in ſtriking his father dumb, and a miracle in opening his mouth; and, at the ſame time, the ſpirit of prophecy comes upon him, as it before came upon his mother. Here were extraordinary events therefore, which might well engage the attention of the people, to conſider what manner of man this ſhould be. But, beſides,

2. There were other things concurred in the manner of his life, which greatly confirmed his prophetical miſſion. He was a man who lived in a very ſtrict and auſtere manner, and remained a conſiderable time in the wilderneſs, *eating locuſts and wild honey*: for in the Eaſtern country there were

[r] Luke 1. 25.

a ſort of locuſts eaten by the people; and wild honey, ſuch as uſed to be found in the holes of rocks, or in the trunks of trees. His habit is alſo deſcribed in ſcripture, to ſhew that he was *one that came in the power and ſpirit of Elias* [r]. Elias is deſcribed to have been *a hairy man, girt with a leathern girdle* [s]. So likewiſe John the baptiſt had *his raiment of camels hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins.* The doctrine of repentance was what he preached in a ſpecial manner; that men muſt repent and reform, or elſe great judgments would befal them. All theſe things concurring, the manner of his life and of his doctrine agreeing to his condition as a Nazarite, and to the work he came about, to prepare the way for the Meſſiah; the people might well judge that he was a prophet, even before they ſaw his own predictions come to paſs. Again,

3. A farther evidence concerning him, was, that our bleſſed Lord himſelf confirmed his miniſtry: for he teſtified of John, as well as John teſtified of him. And his coming to ſubmit to the ordinance of baptiſm from the hand of John, was a loud declaration that he was a prophet: beſides the other things our Saviour ſays, as in the words of our text and context; that he was *more than a prophet, and a greater than thoſe who were born amongſt women.* The words com-

[r] Luke 1. 17. | [s] 2 Kings 1. 8.

pared together, ſignify that he was not only as great, but a *greater prophet*, upon ſome accounts, *than thoſe born among women.* I have ſhewn you the firſt thing, namely, how John appeared to the people as a prophet. They all took him for a prophet, tho he did no miracle: there was the evidence of miracles, and the accompliſhment of predictions.

But the greater difficulty ſtill remains upon our hands: and that is, tho 'tis evident he was a prophet, by what has been ſaid; yet it does not ſeem, at firſt view, ſo plainly to appear that he was *more than a prophet*, as our context declares. Was not Moſes a greater than he, who did ſo many miracles, and eſtabliſhed a new ſyſtem of religion in the world, by the divine direction; and concerning whom 'tis ſaid, in Deut. 34. 10. *there aroſe not a prophet ſince, in Iſrael, like unto Moſes, whom the Lord knew face to face?* Nay, ſo great a prophet was Moſes, that our bleſſed Saviour himſelf is compared to him: *A prophet, like unto me, ſhall the Lord your God raiſe up unto you among your brethren* [t]. And was not Elias an extraordinary prophet, who performed great miracles, and reformed the people of Iſrael; and who, after a life ſpent in theſe great ſervices, was himſelf, without paſſing thro' the gates of death, received up into heaven in a fiery chariot? Were not David and Iſaiah very eminent

[t] Deut. 18. 15.

men,

men, who ſaw Chriſt's day ſo clearly, that they ſpake of the very circumſtances of his ſufferings on the one hand, and his glory on the other? They had a clear view, tho afar off, both of his ſuffering and his exalted ſtate: and is John the baptiſt greater than theſe?

I anſwer: That we are not to underſtand theſe words abſolutely, as if in every particular circumſtance John the baptiſt was a greater prophet than any of thoſe under the old teſtament. As to miraculous performances, 'tis evident there were many ſurpaſſed him; for he did no miracle at all. As to predictions concerning the kingdom of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as well as his ſuffering ſtate; many of the prophets ſeem to ſpeak more largely than any thing that is recorded of John. As for the inſtitution of a new religion, he is not to compare with Moſes on this account. As to reformation, indeed he was eminent; for a conſiderable number of people ſeem'd to become penitent by his means.

But John the baptiſt was *more than a prophet*, in regard of his being the immediate fore-runner of the Meſſiah himſelf; which is a place of greater dignity than any of the former prophets had obtained. Things are brought to perfection gradually. The ſtate of religion, in the time of the patriarchs, was not advanced to that degree which it arrived at in the time of Moſes. The cauſe

of

of religion ſtill gained more ground when the prophets had accompliſhed their predictions, and the people were returned from the Babyloniſh captivity. And now there was to be a new inſtitution, in a little time the kingdom of the Meſſiah was to take place; and therefore John preaches, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* [u]: that is, the ſtate of the church, which had been predicted in the old teſtament, that kingdom is now at the door. John was the perſon who proclaimed this, as the fore-runner of Chriſt. The prophet Iſaiah repreſents him as *the voice of one crying in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths ſtrait* [v]. When great perſons march with a conſiderable retinue, and eſpecially when they will have extraordinary honours done them; perſons are employed to level the ways, and to make the roads good and convenient. So here; *Every hill ſhall be made low, and every valley exalted* [w]. By the way, this is an expreſs prophecy concerning the Meſſiah, as appears by the application of it to Jeſus Chriſt in the new teſtament; and here, in the 3d verſe, he is called *the Lord*, and *our God*: and therefore from this place may be eaſily proved the divinity of our bleſſed Saviour. Now John's buſineſs was to do this, to prepare and diſpoſe the minds of the people, by his doctrine, to humble and

[u] Mat. 3. 2.
[v] Iſa. 40. 3.
[w] Ver. 4.

mortify

mortify their pride, and to encourage and comfort thoſe who were lowly. He lets them know that 'twas a glorious diſpenſation which was arriving, 'twas the kingdom of heaven: and therefore there muſt be a great deal removed out of the way; mens minds muſt be greatly reformed; they muſt part with their ſins, and ſubdue their paſſions: and this was the way to prepare their ſouls for the coming of Chriſt. *The crooked things* were to be *made ſtrait*, and *the rough places plain.*

There was an eminent prophecy concerning John the baptiſt likewiſe, which ſhews that he had the character of a great prophet; in Mal. 3. 1. *Behold, I will ſend my meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye ſeek, ſhall ſuddenly come to his temple; even the meſſenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in. I will ſend my meſſenger;* that is, John the baptiſt. John is called *the meſſenger of Chriſt*; and Chriſt is called *the meſſenger of the covenant.*

Again: another prophecy of John the baptiſt you have in Chap. 4. 5. *Behold, I will ſend you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*, &c. Our Saviour, when he had ſpoken of John's illuſtrious character in the words of the text, aſſures us that this prophecy was fulfilled concerning him: *And, if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come*[x]. Malachi

[x] Mat. 11. 14.

had

had ſaid of him, that he ſhould *turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers* [y]. And the angel tells his father Zecharias, that this prophecy ſhould be fulfilled in him; that *he ſhould go before the Lord, in the ſpirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt.*

It may here be inquired, how it comes to paſs our Saviour ſays, *This is Elias*; whereas, when the Jews inquire of John whether he was Elias, he ſays no? How are theſe things to be reconciled together? John 1. 21. *They ask'd him, Art thou Elias? and he ſaith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? and he anſwered, No.* Yet our Saviour ſays, *This is Elias.*

It appears, that the Jews had the Pythagorean notion concerning the tranſmigration of ſouls; and therefore they were ready to think the ſame concerning Chriſt as concerning John, that *one of the old prophets was riſen again* [z], and did appear in him. And that they had this notion, ſeems plain from the queſtion they ask'd our Saviour concerning the man born blind: *Did this man ſin, or his parents, that he was born blind* [a]? They would never have ask'd ſuch a queſtion if they had not ſuppoſed he was capable of ſinning before he was born; that is, before

[y] Mal. 4. 6.
[z] Luke 9. 8.
[a] John 9. 2.

he

he was born this time: for they ſuppoſed one ſoul might have inhabited divers bodies. When the Jews therefore ask'd John, *whether he was Elias*[b]? John might very well anſwer, no: he was not that perſon; for it is very likely they imagined that the ſoul of Elias might inhabit another body, for a time, in this world, to perform ſome great meſſage. And they ſeemed to underſtand, in a literal ſenſe, the coming of Elias from that prophecy in Malachi; that it ſhould be the ſame perſon, the ſame ſoul at leaſt. Whereas our Saviour, when he ſays, *John was Elias*, means he was the perſon who reſembled Elias. For, as it was in the time of that prophet, ſo when John the baptiſt came, religion was almoſt come to nothing; when the rulers, and Scribes and Phariſees were become extremely corrupt, and impoſed their own traditions upon the people, inſtead of the law of God. Elias led a very auſtere life, and lived much in the wilderneſs; and his habit, and manner of life did much reſemble that of John the baptiſt. And therefore he might well be propheſied of under that name, to ſignify he ſhould be like that perſon.

Now I ſay, conſidering the diſpenſation under which John lived, and that this was his character, that he was the immediate fore-runner of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; he appears to have been dignified above the reſt of the prophets. And, for the ſame reaſon,

[b] John 1. 21.

that

that *the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven was greater than John*, becauſe in a higher and more glorious diſpenſation; John, as being in the ſuburbs of this kingdom, was in a higher diſpenſation than any of the prophets before him.

Again: 'tis to be conſidered, that John the baptiſt was extremely dignified in this, that he did not only *prepare the way* for the Meſſiah, but was his contemporary; converſed with him, nay indeed, baptized him. This was an extraordinary honour to John, that he ſhould adminiſter this ordinance to our bleſſed Redeemer himſelf. He not only ſaw the Meſſiah, and converſed with him; not only acquainted the people with his character, and, pointing at him, ſaid, *Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world* [c]; but by his hands was our bleſſed Lord himſelf baptized in Jordan. And, on this account, he may be ſaid to be *greater than other prophets.* Thus as the virgin-mother of our Lord was ſaid to be *bleſſed above women* [d]; ſo might John be ſaid to be bleſſed and honoured *above other prophets.*

Again: The wonderful ſucceſs of the miniſtry of John the baptiſt, makes it appear that he was an extraordinary prophet; and juſtly diſtinguiſhes him from thoſe who went before him. As he declared the truth con-

[c] John 1. 29. | [d] Luke 1. 28.

cerning

cerning the Meſſiah, and declared more plainly thoſe great truths which belonged to the Mediator; ſo likewiſe there was a greater ſucceſs attending his miniſtry, than we read accompanied that of any of the prophets who were before him. Indeed, in the time of Moſes, the people ſeem'd to be willing to engage in the form of religion and worſhip which he publiſhed; but you find how often they revolted: and it appears there were but few of them who were truly devout and religious. In the time of Elias there were ſome, whom God had preſerved, who had not bowed the knee to Baal; and there was ſome reformation from idolatry: but how few, in compariſon, ſeem'd to be devoted to the ſervice of the true God, with all their hearts? But John the baptiſt came *in the power and ſpirit of Elias*, but with greater ſucceſs. The people were all convinced that John was a prophet, and multitudes were baptized by him. Indeed afterwards he *decreaſed*, and Chriſt *increaſed*; but, at the beginning of his miniſtry, his ſucceſs was wonderful: *Jeruſalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, went out to be baptized of him*; that is, very great numbers of people. We find often, that the Jews reſiſted the prophets and their counſel, and put them to death: but here was an extraordinary ſucceſs, which John's miniſtry had upon their hearts. John had a greater portion of the Spirit of God accompanying his miniſtry, to perſuade the

the minds of men, and to engage them to obey his doctrine. So that, upon these accounts, he appears to have exceeded the other prophets.

The next thing I should come to consider, is, That notwithstanding this, *he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than John*, as great as he appears to be. This is the character of the disciples of our blessed Redeemer; *the least* among them *is greater than John the baptist*. But this I must leave to another opportunity.

SERMON X.

Preach'd at *PINNERS-HALL*, Nov. 15, 1707.

MATT. xi. 11, 12.

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he. And from the days of John the baptist, until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

The second SERMON on this text.

HAVING discourſed of the character our Saviour gives us of John the baptiſt, that *among them that are born of women, there hath not riſen a greater than he*; I proceed to conſider,

II. The character of the diſciples of our Lord, as preferred to that of John; how, notwithſtanding the dignity of John the baptiſt above all the prophets who went before

him, *he that is leaſt in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than* this great perſon. At firſt ſight it might have ſeemed ſtrange that John the baptiſt, *who did no miracle,* and whoſe writings made up no book of the holy ſcriptures, as thoſe of Iſaiah, Jeremiah, and others did, how he ſhould be accounted *greater* than any of thoſe prophets. But that has been explained to you. Now a new wonder ariſes in what our Saviour ſays, that *he who is leaſt in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than John the baptiſt.* And here it will be proper for us to conſider,

1. What is ſignified by *the kingdom of heaven.*

2. Who is, by our Saviour, termed *the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven.*

3. How *he that is leaſt in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than John the baptiſt.*

1. We are to conſider what is ſignified by *the kingdom of heaven.*

The kingdom of heaven is an expreſſion very frequently uſed in the new teſtament. *John preach'd, ſaying, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* [e]. And our Saviour often ſpeaks of thoſe who ſhould be *great,* and thoſe who ſhould be *leaſt in the kingdom of heaven* [f]. *The kingdom of heaven* is likewiſe repreſented under various figures in the para-

[e] Mat. 3. 2. | [f] *Chap.* 5. 19.

bles

bles of Christ: it is said to be *like to ten virgins, five wise, and five foolish* [g]; *like to a net cast into the sea* [h]; *like a merchant-man, seeking goodly pearls* [i], &c. In all which parables our Lord represents the state of things under the dispensation of the gospel. 'Tis true, that sometimes *the kingdom of God*, or the *kingdom of heaven*, signifies the state of glory: but most commonly, in the new testament, it signifies the state of grace, which is a state preparatory to that of glory; a state under the regulation and reformation which our Saviour has made. This is called *the kingdom of God*, and *the kingdom of heaven*; as may plainly appear from those parables in Mat. 13. and elsewhere. For, in the world above, there is no *sowing the seed of the word* to convert men: but this represents the state of things during the administration of grace. There are no *foolish virgins* in the kingdom of glory: but, during the state of the kingdom of grace, there are people who profess the true religion, some of whom have but the *form of godliness*, and *want the power* [k]; whereas others have the power as well as the form of it.

It was of this state of things that John spake, in a special manner, when he said, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand.* And our blessed Saviour frequently speaks in the same manner. And thus we must understand our

[g] Mat. 25. 1.
[h] *Chap.* 13. 47.
[i] Ver. 45.
[k] 2 Tim. 3. 5.

text of the kingdom of grace: for it would be no ſuch wonderful thing, nor would it need ſuch a ſtrong aſſeveration as our Saviour gives it, to gain credit that *the leaſt in the kingdom of glory* ſhould be *greater than John the baptiſt.* It is enough to ſay, that all men, except our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, have imperfections and ſins during their abode in this world; which renders the condition of the beſt here, by far leſs conſiderable than that where *the ſpirits of juſt men are made perfect:* and therefore we muſt underſtand this concerning the kingdom of grace.

This ſenſe is more fully confirmed by the words which follow: *For from the days of John the baptiſt until now, the kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* This could not be ſo well ſaid of the kingdom of glory. *From the days of John the baptiſt until now,* a way was preparing for men to get into the evangelick ſtate. *And the kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* This is ſaid to repreſent after what manner men would endeavour to obtain the privileges of that ſtate. And this is farther explained in Luke 16. 16. *The law and the prophets were until John.* The diſpenſation of the law was given by Moſes, and then the prophets followed after: ſince that time here was a new epocha and ſtate of things. *Since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man preſſeth into it:* that is, a great number of people have now

now their thoughts engaged concerning the kingdom of God, and ſeem deſirous to enter into this new ſtate of things. This is the ſame with the *kingdom of heaven* in our text, which *ſuffereth violence.* The ſaying, *Every man preſſeth into it*, ſeems to be the ſame thing with what our Saviour ſays concerning its *ſuffering violence, and the violent taking it by force.*

This matter being ſtated, that the kingdom of heaven ſignifies in our text the ſtate of grace, the diſpenſation of the goſpel; 'tis proper to explain, in the next place, the propriety of this expreſſion, and the reaſon why this ſtate of things, under the goſpel, is called *the kingdom of heaven.*

'Tis called *a kingdom:* and, to expreſs the nature of it, and its preference to other diſpenſations which were before, 'tis called *the kingdom of heaven.*

'Tis called *a kingdom:* for a kingdom being one form of government, may be taken in general to repreſent a regular and orderly ſtate of things. The diſpenſation and ſtate of things which our Saviour has ordained under the goſpel, is regular and orderly. 'Tis not a ſtate of anarchy and confuſion: men are not left to do what is right in their own eyes, but are ordered and diſpoſed in a certain way and form of government which our Saviour has inſtituted in his church, and ought to be complied with by every one who is willing to be his diſciple. The church of

Chriſt is not a tumultuous ſociety, gathered together after the manner that the people were, of whom we read, in the Acts of the apoſtles at Epheſus, that *the greateſt part knew not wherefore they were come together* [l]. When there was a popular commotion and diſturbance, curioſity led them together, tho the greateſt part knew not the occaſion. No; Chriſt has ordained that his church ſhould be a regular ſociety: 'tis a well-ordered kingdom and government. Men are to know the rules by which they are to be governed; and there are therefore laws which belong to this kingdom. 'Tis a ſtate of things that is fitly adapted to the great end and purpoſe for which he has deſigned it; namely, to render men happy here and for ever. And therefore, whatever has been charged upon the church of God, 'tis the beſt conſtituted and the moſt orderly community in the world; and is adapted to render any human ſociety or conſtitution happy to as great a degree as they are capable of. If the laws and regulations of chriſtianity were univerſally to obtain, how happy would mankind be? If every one *ſought not* ſo much *his own* intereſt, as the intereſt *of Chriſt* [m]; if men *laid aſide all anger, wrath, malice, evil ſpeaking* [n], and evil ſurmiſing too; if they would forego all revenge, and leave *vengeance to God, to whom it belongs, and who will repay it* [o]; if

[l] Acts 19. 32.
[m] Phil. 2. 21.
[n] Eph. 4. 31.
[o] Heb. 10. 30.

they

they would *do to others what they would have others do unto them* [p]; if they counted all mankind their neighbours; if they *went about doing good* [q], and delighted in those excellent rules of charity which the institution of our blessed Saviour recommends; what a happy world would it be? The rules and laws of the christian religion are very agreeable to human society, and will promote the interest of it; and do exceed all human laws and constitutions whatsoever. Human laws can only respect the manners of men, and dispose them to act things which are for the good of society: but christianity reaches the heart, governs the mind, and prescribes laws to the conscience; so that the *tree* being *good*, the *fruit* may appear to be *good* also [r].

But the state of christianity is called *a kingdom*, not only because it is a regular and orderly state of government, but because of the particular form of its government; for 'tis indeed a monarchy. And tho an absolute monarchy is a form of government not safe for any human society, because of the frailties and vices, and evil passions of men; yet this is the best government of all, when the monarchy is perfect: and our Saviour being the governor, and he knowing infinitely well what is for the advantage of his subjects, and having infinite power to protect and defend them, and being infinitely merciful and ready

[p] Mat. 7. 12.
[q] Acts 10. 38.
[r] Mat. 7. 17.

to beſtow all privileges upon them, and infinitely juſt, ſo that there can be no injury done to any under his government with impunity; on theſe conſiderations, I ſay, this muſt be the moſt happy conſtitution in the world, becauſe we have the ſecurity of ſo excellent a monarch, and who continues *the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever* [r]. For we are not to change our head. As he is a *high prieſt that continues ever* [s]; ſo he is a king who continues for ever. *His kingdom is an everlaſting kingdom; and of his government there ſhall be no end* [t].

It may be termed *a kingdom* likewiſe, in regard of the great privileges and advantages which accrue to men thereby. For ſo 'tis in government amongſt men in general; there are conſiderable advantages accruing to the people: as there are laws to oblige the ſubjects to duty and obedience; ſo there are advantages and privileges to be enjoyed by them. As we pay taxes; and as we, by our perſons, and by our eſtates, and by our intereſt, do what we can for the ſupport of that government under which we live; ſo likewiſe that government owes protection to us, and gives us ſuch privileges and advantages as make it worth our while to endeavour the ſupport of it: ſo that here are mutual obligations. But tho we can lay no obligation upon our bleſſed Saviour, yet we have the

[r] Heb. 13. 8.
[s] *Chap.* 7. 21.
[t] Dan. 7. 14.

greateſt

greateſt privileges and advantages given us by him, and much greater than are to be expected in any civil government whatſoever. In his kingdom things are ſo ordered, not only that we ſhould be protected by his power; for he has arms to defend his people, he is able to ſave them, and preſerve them from all their enemies: 'tis not only that we ſhould enjoy the ſecurity and ſafety of our perſons, and that we ſhould have various other privileges conſequent thereupon; but ſo is his government ordered, that all his ſubjects are, in a ſort, kings. And 'tis *a kingdom of prieſts*: for they are *prieſts and kings*; as 'tis explained by the apoſtle Peter: *a royal prieſthood, an holy nation, and a peculiar people* [u]. And our Lord ſays, they are to rule and reign with him: *They that overcome, muſt ſit down with him in his throne*, in the kingdom of glory; *as he overcame, and ſat down with his Father in his throne* [v]. Well may it be called *a kingdom*, when the ſubjects of it are, in ſome ſort, princes; as they are allied to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and as they are made his favourites. As kings have their favourites, whom they exalt to ſtations of great dignity and power, ſo our Saviour exalts all his ſubjects; makes them *kings and prieſts* [w]; gives them not only a ſtate of immunity, but advances them to this dignity and honour.

[u] 1 Pet. 2. 9.
[v] Rev. 3. 21.
[w] *Chap.* 1. 6.

But

But as 'tis termed *a kingdom*, ſo 'tis called *the kingdom of heaven*; and this firſt in regard of the author of this kingdom, who is God. 'Tis not conſtituted according to the kingdoms of this world; according to thoſe forms which men have invented, and thoſe politicks by which they govern. *In the days of thoſe kingdoms*, as the prophet Daniel ſpeaks, when he treats of the monarchies of the world, *ſhall the God of heaven ſet up a kingdom* [x]. And the kingdom of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is begun in the world: this kingdom, the ſtate of grace, was ſet up under the fourth monarchy, while the Roman government obtained in the world; and this kingdom of our bleſſed Saviour has proſpered and prevailed ſo as to overcome the hearts of many, and to baffle the power of the Roman empire itſelf. When one reads the goſpel, and conſiders the doctrines and the morals of it, its excellent conſtitution, and the account which it gives concerning the perſon and offices of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the duties and privileges of chriſtians; there is reaſon to acknowledge that God is the author of it. Men could never have invented ſuch a ſcheme and ſyſtem of religion. And then, the miracles which have been wrought for its confirmation, and the prophecies which have been accompliſhed concerning it, do abundantly evince that God is the author of this kingdom. And, indeed, ſince it has pre-

[x] Dan. 2. 44.

vailed

vailed in the world, contrary to the expectations of men; since it has prospered under adversity and persecution, and against the policy of the world: this is an evident indication that 'tis *the God of heaven* who has *set up this kingdom*; that the Almighty has established it, who works upon the hearts of men, and disposes of their minds and consciences as he pleases.

But, farther: As 'tis called *the kingdom of heaven* in regard of its author; so in regard of its end and tendency: not only does it lead men to the kingdom and state of glory, but likewise this is the immediate dispensation which precedes that of glory. *The law and the prophets were until John* [y]; and John's dispensation endured for a while, but it decreased and gave way to that of the Messiah. But the Messiah's kingdom, his dispensation endures for ever; he established the kingdom of heaven in the world: for this dispensation of the gospel leads men directly to heaven; there is no higher dispensation to be established in the world: and therefore these things are spoken of promiscuously. As the state of glory is called *the kingdom of heaven*, so is the state of grace. The apostle speaks to the Ephesians of our enjoying *spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ* [z]; and argues from thence, that since christians are arrived at such an excellent state, they should

[y] Mat. 11. 13. | [z] Eph. 1. 3.

have

have their converſation in heaven. And the author to the Hebrews ſays, *We are come to mount Sion, to the city of the living God; to the heavenly Jeruſalem, to an innumerable company of angels; to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, which are written in heaven; and to God, the judge of all; and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect* [a]: that is, we are to come to the heavenly ſtate. When he ſpeaks of the œconomy of the law, and the ceremonies of it, he ſpeaks of them as *carnal* and *earthly* things, comparatively; whereas he ſays, *the heavenly things muſt be purged by better ſacrifices* [b]. What many prophets and righteous men longed to ſee and hear, and did not, theſe are diſcovered to us under the goſpel. Thoſe ſublime truths concerning the incarnation of our bleſſed Saviour, concerning his atoning ſacrifice, concerning his reſurrection, his aſcenſion, the effuſion of his holy Spirit, the efficacy of his grace, and the certainty of his *coming, in the fulneſs of time*, with *his reward with him, and his work before him* [c]; theſe are ſo plainly explained to us in the goſpel, and the myſteries of grace ſo unfolded, that there is an infinite diſproportion betwixt what is now revealed and what was formerly under the diſpenſation of the law; becauſe things were then covered with types and ſhadows, and myſtical predictions: whereas now we are

[a] Heb. 12. 22, 23.
[b] *Chap.* 9. 23.
[c] Iſa. 40. 10.

ſaid,

ſaid, *with open face, to behold the glory of the Lord* [d].

And the ſame which is ſaid concerning the doctrines of chriſtianity, may be ſaid concerning its morals. Such are the excellent motives to prepare and diſpoſe men to an extraordinary degree of holineſs and purity, that it were to be expected that the chriſtian church ſhould be like *the kingdom of heaven*, for the purity of the manners of the people. How much were it to be wiſhed, that the evangelick ſtate anſwered things ſo; and that thoſe who make a profeſſion of the name of Jeſus, by their converſation ſhewed that this was a heavenly diſpenſation! The deſign of it is to raiſe mens minds above temporal things, and to engage them to *place their* deſires and *affections above*; to *purify* and refine *their hearts* and imaginations: and if the rules and precepts of the goſpel were obſerved, it would appear indeed to be *the kingdom of heaven.* Its end and deſign is to lead men to the ſtate of glory; and, in order to this, to prepare them for it, by making them conformable to that ſtate.

Upon theſe accounts is it called *the kingdom of heaven.* There is no new diſpenſation of things to be expected; but the end of this diſpenſation of grace will be that of glory. And thus 'tis ſpoken of but as one diſpenſation; ſince the kingdom of grace, and that of glory, belong both to Chriſt, are erected

[d] 2 Cor. 3. 18.

by

by the ſame Meſſiah. And indeed that kingdom of grace which he has eſtabliſhed, when it comes to its full maturity, will be ripened into glory: and as he now calls it *the kingdom of heaven*, he will then, by its purity and glory, make it appear to be ſuch.

2. We are now to conſider what is meant by *the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven.*

This muſt be underſtood either of the leaſt perſon in the ſtate of grace, a perſon of the loweſt degree or rank in the church of God; or the leaſt who is a miniſter or prophet, becauſe our Saviour is ſpeaking concerning greater or leſſer prophets before; or elſe this muſt concern the apoſtles and immediate followers of Chriſt, who had an extraordinary commiſſion from him, and were enabled to do miracles at that time when our Saviour ſpake.

As to this laſt: if, by *the leaſt in the kingdom of God*, we underſtand the leaſt of thoſe miniſters whom our Saviour qualified to perform miracles while he was in the world, *that the leaſt of theſe was greater than John*; then it means that they were arrived to a higher and more excellent ſtate than John. They performed miracles, whereas John did not: and that was not all; but they had a farther diſcovery, from our Saviour's mouth, of the myſtery of his kingdom, than ever John had.

If it be underſtood of thoſe miniſters in general, who ſhould live under the diſpenſation

ſation of the goſpel; then it may have regard not only to thoſe who lived in the primitive time, when the holy Spirit was poured forth after an extraordinary manner, but to others in ſucceſſive generations; who alſo, in regard of their condition, ſtation, and employment, might, in a very proper ſenſe, be ſaid to be *greater than John the baptiſt.* Theſe were perſons who partook more largely of the privileges of this kingdom, and could preach the goſpel after ſuch a manner as tranſcended what John was capable of doing.

Or, in the laſt place, if it be underſtood of the leaſt believer in the goſpel-church; why this, on ſome accounts, may be made to appear, that *the leaſt of theſe is greater than John the baptiſt*; that is, is greater, in reſpect of the diſpenſation, as John was greater than the prophets before him. Not that he did miracles like them, or inſtituted a new religion like them; not that his hiſtory or prophecies make an intire book, like ſome of the writings of the prophets; but becauſe of the excellency of the diſpenſation, and his expreſs declaring what the prophets were not capable of underſtanding ſo well as he. Thus, tho the leaſt believer in the goſpel-church is very inferior to John, upon other accounts; yet, with reſpect to the clearer light and greater privileges of the diſpenſation he is under, he may be ſaid to be preferred before him.

But I rather chuſe to interpret theſe words with reference to thoſe who *miniſter* under the diſpenſation of the goſpel: for our Saviour is ſpeaking of prophets, of thoſe who were employed in this ſervice, and ſent of God to inſtruct the people. Now, ſays he, *The leaſt in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the baptiſt.* And this will appear to us by divers conſiderations.

Let it be ſuppoſed that our bleſſed Saviour, when he ſpeaks of *the kingdom of heaven* in a ſpecial manner, ſpeaks of that ſtate of things which followed his aſcenſion into glory: for then he eſtabliſhed his kingdom in a ſpecial manner; *then was the prince of this world caſt out* [e]; then was the kingdom of Satan, in a ſort, ſubverted, when our Saviour *triumphed openly upon the croſs* [f]. Soon after this he riſes from the dead, and aſcends into heaven; and his Spirit is poured forth after an extraordinary manner: and now *the leaſt*, under this ſtate of things, *was greater than John the baptiſt.*

(1.) It was ſo in regard of their knowledge of the truth. If we compare what the apoſtles of our Saviour believed after his death, with what they did before, we ſhall find their knowledge was wonderfully improved. Chriſt himſelf complains of their being *ſlow of heart to believe* before [g]: and it is evident, by the fears which were upon them when

[e] John 12. 31.
[f] Col. 2. 15.
[g] Luke 24. 15.

our

our Lord was crucified; and by their readineſs to conclude almoſt that all hope was gone, when they ſaid, *We truſted this had been he that would have redeemed Iſrael* [h]. We may know, by this, how little they underſtood of the myſtery of the chriſtian religion, in compariſon of what they did afterwards, after the effuſion of the holy Spirit, whereby they were ſo capable of advancing the knowledge of the goſpel. See what the apoſtle Peter ſays, in his epiſtles, concerning the ſufferings of Chriſt; and ſee how great a difference there is in his knowledge. And if the immediate diſciples of our Lord, upon the account of the inſtructions, and other advantages they had from Chriſt himſelf, when they converſed with him, were to be preferred before John; how much were they to be preferred before him and his diſpenſation when their minds were illuminated, and ſo great grace was upon them as after the effuſion of the holy Spirit? And indeed *the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven*, the leaſt miniſter who lives under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, may be ſuppoſed to know more than John the baptiſt. For we have the ſayings of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the commiſſions he gave to his diſciples; we have the doctrines of the apoſtles themſelves laid for a foundation of the chriſtian religion in the world: and here we have things more plainly revealed to us than were in the

[h] Luke 24. 21.

time of John the baptiſt, even by that great miniſter. He could ſay, *Behold the lamb of God, that takes away the ſin of the world* [i]: but we can ſay, *Behold the lamb of God, that* has taken *away the ſin of the world*; that has ſhed his precious blood for ſinners. John could ſay, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* [k]: but we can ſay, *Repent* now, *for the kingdom of heaven is come*; and that glorious diſpenſation is that under which we live. John could reveal to the people ſome notions of the Meſſiah which were true; but nothing that is comparable to what we have in the writings of the apoſtles, who were ſo extraordinarily inſpired by our bleſſed Redeemer.

(2.) As it was for knowledge, ſo for the evidence and proof of the truth of things; Not only are things more clearly explained, but there is a greater evidence, by a greater number of miracles, and a greater number of prophecies accompliſhed, than in the time of John. The apoſtles refer to abundance of paſſages in the prophetic writings; and to the miracles which were wrought. And our Saviour ſays, *If ye believe, ye ſhall ſee greater things than theſe* [l]. Again,

(3.) It was ſo in regard of the efficacy of the divine grace upon the minds of men. There was ſomething very remarkable indeed in the ſucceſs of John's miniſtry; but there

[i] John 1. 29.
[k] Mat. 3. 2.
[l] John 1. 50.

was

was much more in the miniſtry of the apoſtles, when the Spirit was poured forth: not only a multitude of the Jews, but Gentiles were converted. Thoſe who were brought to repentance by John's miniſtry, do not appear to have been thorowly turned. But after Chriſt was crucified, there was a wonderful converſion; and greater grace was implanted in the minds of people, to bring them to an evangelic repentance. *The law was given by Moſes; but grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt* [m]. There was *more grace*, as well as *more truth*. And as the apoſtles and firſt miniſters of chriſtianity differed mightily from themſelves after they had received the holy Spirit; ſo certainly the work of the holy Spirit, under the diſpenſation of the goſpel in ordinary times, exceeds what the miniſtration of John could arrive to. *The kingdom of God is within you* [n], as our Saviour ſays: that is, "The power of "the divine government appears in the re- "novation of your hearts, by rendring you "conformable to my doctrine and example."

Thus have I ſhewn you, that *the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the baptiſt*.

I now come to the laſt thing, *viz.* The deſcription of the ſtate of things, from the miniſtry of John, unto the time when our Saviour uttered theſe words; *The kingdom of*

[m] John 1. 17. | [n] Luke 17. 21.

heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force: but this muſt be reſerved to another time. Let me make a few reflections upon what you have heard, and ſo conclude.

1. As what has been ſaid ſhews that the diſpenſation of the goſpel is the laſt and beſt diſpenſation, and therefore called *the kingdom of heaven*; ſo it ſhould inſpire us with thankſgiving to the Almighty, that he has caſt our lot under ſo excellent an adminiſtration. We have the things which *the prophets and righteous men ſpake of, and longed to ſee, and yet did not* [o]. Moreover, it ſhews us our danger, *if we neglect ſo great a ſalvation* as this [p]; and don't improve a diſpenſation which raiſes us ſo high above what was in the time of the prophets, or of John. The chriſtian church is eminently termed the bride of our Saviour; *the bride, the lamb's wife* [q]. John was *the friend of the bridegroom* [r], and he directed to Jeſus Chriſt; he *prepared the way for him.* But the chriſtian church is a more excellent ſtate; and therefore called *the kingdom of heaven.* The more excellent the diſpenſation is, the higher obligation are we under to adore the divine goodneſs; and the more dangerous will it be to offend againſt ſo much grace and love. As we have greater opportunity of knowledge,

[o] Mat. 13. 17.
[p] Heb. 2. 3.
[q] Rev. 21. 9.
[r] John 3. 29.

and the promiſe of the aſſiſtance of the divine Spirit; as we have the moſt excellent precepts, and the moſt endearing motives imaginable; what account ſhall we render to God if we deſpiſe this day of grace, which is the laſt ſtate of things? There will be no other goſpel, no greater mediator than our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, no other Saviour: things are come to a maturity; the goſpel-church is *the kingdom of heaven.* Now we are to *work while it is day* [f], and to ſeek an everlaſting intereſt in this kingdom: for if we neglect this adminiſtration of grace, no other will be afforded us.

2. If this be ſo excellent a ſtate of things, and called *the kingdom of God*, and *the kingdom of heaven*; how much is it to be lamented, that the piety and holineſs of thoſe who profeſs the chriſtian religion, does not more recommend it under this excellent character! The primitive chriſtians recommended it by what they did and ſuffered. They ſhew'd their hope was in heaven, by their holy conformity to the doctrine and example of their Lord; and by their contemning ſufferings and death for the ſake of the truth. It were to be wiſh'd that *our converſation* likewiſe was *more in heaven, from whence we expect our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt* [s].

3. After how heavenly a manner ſhould our worſhip be performed? With what ſo-

[f] John 9. 4. [s] Phil. 3. 20.

lemnity? with what intention of mind? with what application of heart to the divine ſervice? with what a regard to the preſence of God, ſeeing the diſpenſation of the goſpel is called *the kingdom of heaven?* We are to imagine ourſelves in the ſuburbs of heaven, as it were; and to ſet before us the pattern of the holy angels, and *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*; and endeavour to imitate them, by the ſpirituality of our performances. And this ſhews how pure we ſhould keep the divine worſhip from the inventions of men, and their innovations: for whatſoever ſome may pretend of a great number of ceremonies, as if theſe would excite their devotion; ſince God has not ſeen fit to inſtitute them, we ſhould content ourſelves with thoſe ordinances and rites which he has given us. And tho a great number of ceremonies of God's inſtitution was agreeable to the law, yet now the goſpel ſtate is come, we have a new and ſpiritual ſtate of things, and divine truths are more clearly explained to us; the church is come to a greater maturity, and has not need of thoſe things which belonged to it in its minority. And as it is plain, from the regulation God has made of things under the goſpel, that he has judg'd that a ſimple and plain manner of worſhip is beſt ſuited to the ſpirituality of this diſpenſation; ſo it is very evident, that the great number of ceremonies which human invention has introduced into the wor-

ſhip

ſhip of God, have a tendency to hinder men from that attention they ſhould give to ſpiritual doctrine, rather than to excite true devotion in their minds.

4. This ſhould engage perſons to aſpire, if they have not a place in the church of God; if they have not made a ſolemn profeſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſubmitted to his ordinances; to aſpire, I ſay, after this privilege. For who would not have an intereſt in the church of God, under an adminiſtration which is properly called *the kingdom of heaven*; a ſtate of things which is ſo full of grace now, and that will iſſue in ſo much glory hereafter? Sure 'tis worth the while to be reſolved to have an intereſt in the church of Chriſt, and *a name and a place there.*

5. Seeing the goſpel-diſpenſation, even as it now is, very juſtly bears the excellent character of *the kingdom of heaven*; how glorious will that ſtate of things be, which is ſpoken of in the latter days, when multitudes of converts ſhall be brought in; *when they ſhall fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows*[1]?

Laſtly, How glorious will that ſtate be which ſhall endure for ever? when we ſhall be free from all ſin and ſorrow, free from every thing which may diſturb our joy and glory; and receive every thing which ſhall extend our bliſs and honour to the higheſt perfection of which we are capable?

[1] Iſa. 60. 8.

SERMON XI.

Preach'd at *PINNERS-HALL*, Nov. 29, 1707.

MATT. xi. 11, 12.

Verily I ſay unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not riſen a greater than John the baptiſt: notwithſtanding, he that is leaſt in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he. And from the days of John the baptiſt, until now, the kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

The third SERMON on this text.

HAVING, on the former of theſe verſes, inquired into the character of John the baptiſt; and ſeen that tho he was very great, yet *the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*; from the other verſe I now proceed to conſider,

III. Our Lord's deſcription of the ſtate of things, from the miniſtry of John, until that time wherein theſe words were ſpoken. And here it will be proper,

1. To

1. To explain the terms used to express the condition and state of the church, from the beginning of John's ministry to the time wherein our Saviour utters this expression.

2. To consider the principal things contained herein; the great truths our Saviour would suggest in these terms.

3. To make some reflections hereupon.

1. 'Tis proper to consider the terms. *From the days of John the baptist until now:* that is, from the days of John's ministry; for John was sent to preach the doctrine of the approaching *kingdom of heaven:* from the time that he began to minister, until this time of the ministry of Christ; for our Lord had been some time engaged in that work. John was his fore-runner, who *prepared the way*, and gave the people notice of *the kingdom of heaven*, that it was *very nigh*, *even at the door*; and afterwards told them who was the Messiah: and then our Saviour's ministry took place; John *decreased*, Christ *increased*; John was cast into prison, Christ continued exercising his ministry. And we read that *Jesus made more disciples than John* [u]: tho he baptized none himself, yet however they were baptized by his disciples. So that our Saviour means by this expression, *From the days of John the baptist until now*; "from the "time that John began his ministry till this

[u] John 4. 1.

"very

'very moment, in which I am ſpeaking
'to you."

We are farther to take notice, that this, *until now*, does not exclude the future time. For *until* is often uſed after ſuch a manner as not to exclude futurity: *He ſhall not fail, nor be diſcouraged, till he have ſet judgment in the earth* [v]; *and hath brought judgment to victory* [w]. The word does not ſignify, he ſhall fail and be diſcouraged, when he has brought judgment to victory; but this ſhall be the certain conſequence of his courage and reſolution, he ſhall do this without fail. So here; *From the days of John the baptiſt, until now, the kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence.* This was begun under the miniſtry of John, and this work proceeds and goes on until now; and no ſtop ſhall be put to it, but ſtill this ſhall be the ſtate and condition of things: *The kingdom of heaven* ſhall *ſuffer violence, and the violent take it by force.* However this might be true in regard of the time in which our Saviour ſpake; it does not follow but it was true alſo in ſome ſubſequent times, *that the kingdom of heaven* ſhould *ſuffer violence:* nay, thro'out all the ages of the world, that this would be the caſe, till the church was perfect and complete.

And this is very agreeable with what our Saviour ſays afterwards: *All the prophets and the law propheſied until John* [x]; but he inti-

[v] Iſa. 42. 4.
[w] Luke 12. 20.
[x] Mat. 11. 13.

mates,

mates, that John's miniſtry introduced ſome change in the ſtate of things: for tho he did not bring a new inſtitution of religion, he came to prepare men for it, by the ordinance of baptiſm, to receive the kingdom of the Meſſiah.

The event is expreſſed in theſe words: *The kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

I need not take up time to explain what is here ſignified by *the kingdom of heaven*, becauſe, in the foregoing words, 'tis uſed in that which is the common ſenſe of it in the new teſtament; namely, the ſtate of things under the diſpenſation of the goſpel. Our Lord expreſſes himſelf in the preſent tenſe; *The kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence:* that is, this is the ſtate and condition wherein we find things now under the goſpel. This is the condition of the church now; and this is the diſpenſation we are now under: we are come to this bright and glorious ſtate of things, which is ſpoken of by the prophets, ever ſince the world began. Now, ſays he, that this kingdom is eſtabliſhed, this is the condition thereof; *It ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

This may ſeem a pretty ſtrange expreſſion concerning *the kingdom of heaven*, the ſtate of things under the goſpel. And indeed the terms are ſomewhat peculiar; and the like are not uſed upon any other occaſion by our Saviour, or by his apoſtles. There are ſeveral

ral interpretations of these words. Some take them in an active sense; *The kingdom of heaven offers violence*, or makes efforts: the kingdom of heaven exerts itself with great vigor and strength. As much as to say, "Things were obscure before John appeared "in the world. Then was the gospel-state "expected, but now it begins to appear; "it exerts itself, it buds forth, it begins to "shew its strength and vigour: and some ad- "vances are made towards the establishment "of it. And not only does it exert itself in "the general, by shewing itself in the world; "but it may in like manner signify, that "it offers a sort of violence: it beats down "the opposition which is against it; it breaks "thro' all difficulties and obstacles which "are in the way, how much soever men "are indisposed, by their prejudices, to re- "ceive the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. "However men of power exert themselves "against it, it breaks down all opposition "which stands in its way; it prevails, it "goes on and prospers."

'Tis easy to shew that this sense is not at all inconsistent with the state of things, when our Saviour manifested himself to the world; as we find the history of them recorded in the gospels. There was great opposition, and by those from whom one would have thought it should be least expected: those who were called *the children of the kingdom* [y],

[y] Mat. 8. 12.

and

and were counted the *peculiar people* of God' and ſeemed *to wait for the conſolation of Iſrael*; yet theſe ſet themſelves in oppoſition to the Meſſiah, becauſe he did not appear in ſuch a form, and with ſuch pomp and ſplendor as they expected. And becauſe his forerunner, John the baptiſt, awakened them to repentance, and was ſtrict and ſevere in his diſcipline; the Scribes and Phariſees, who pretended to have already attained to a ſufficiency of righteouſneſs, *rejected the counſel of God againſt themſelves*[z], and ſubmitted not to his baptiſm.

Now if the words be taken in this ſenſe, "The kingdom of heaven exerts itſelf with "vigour, or ſtruggles with oppoſition, and "prevails againſt it;" 'tis a prophecy of our Saviour that the truth ſhould prevail and proſper, as well as a declaration what effect it already had in the world. "The kingdom of heaven is advancing againſt all the "oppoſition which is made againſt it. Great "ſigns and wonders do ſhew forth themſelves in me;" as if he ſhould ſay, "and "in my diſciples: and my doctrine begins "to prevail, and to gain upon the minds of "men." And if the words are to be taken in this ſenſe; then thoſe which follow, *The violent take it by force*, ſeem to be ſpoken in oppoſition, as it were. As much as if our Saviour ſhould ſay; "The kingdom of hea"ven exerts its force, the ſtate of things

[z] Luke 7. 30.

"under

" under the goſpel prevails, and this glo-
" rious adminiſtration ſhews itſelf in the
" world: and as that appears with vigour,
" ſo the people who will be intereſted in this
" diſpenſation, will be inſpired with vigour
" and reſolution too. The kingdom of God
" advances, it ſprings forth, and ſhews its
" force in the world; and thoſe who will
" obtain this kingdom, muſt ſhew a great
" deal of reſolution too."

But then if it be taken paſſively, as the generality of interpreters underſtand it, that the kingdom of heaven is violated, or *ſuffers violence*, as our tranſlation renders it; it may be interpreted, either of the perſecution and oppreſſion which was exerciſed againſt the church of God at its firſt planting: for the time when our Saviour ſpeaks, was when John was caſt into priſon. Now, ſays he, *the kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence*; it is oppreſſed: here is John, my meſſenger, ſent to *prepare* my *way before me*, and he is caſt into priſon. And ſo ſome interpret the other words, and *the violent take it by force*; they lay forcible hands upon him, and endeavour to ſuppreſs this kindom: however, their deſigns will be ineffectual. The ſubjects of my kingdom are oppreſs'd and perſecuted; and my doctrine deſigned to be ſuppreſs'd.

Or elſe it may be underſtood to regard the great number of perſons who did attend the doctrine of John the baptiſt and of our Saviour. All Judea and Jeruſalem came forth

to

to the baptiſm of John: and multitudes followed our Lord Jeſus Chriſt to hear his doctrine. Says he, *The kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence*, as it were: men ruſh into this kingdom, as it ſeems; by their eagerneſs, their earneſt deſire to hear the doctrine of it. For they were in ſome meaſure prepared by the miniſtry of John, and from the time that he began to preach: when once they received his doctrine, the people ſeemed very vigorous and eager for the kingdom of Chriſt; they waited for it with great impatience, were for haſtening it as much as poſſible: and, when it came, they preſs'd into it with much earneſtneſs, and in great numbers. And after this manner our tranſlators ſeem to take the ſame word, when they ſo render it in Luke 16. 16. *The law and the prophets were until John; ſince that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man preſſeth into it* [a]. Men who are eager to get into ſome place, and are ſtriving who ſhall get in firſt in a croud, offer a ſort of violence one to another, that each one may get in before the other. And ſo the tranſlators ſeem to have underſtood the word here; *The kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence:* men are preſſing and ſtriving who ſhall be foremoſt, who ſhall get firſt into this new ſtate of things; and who ſhall have the greateſt advancement therein. So the children of Zebe-

[a] Καὶ πᾶς εἰς αὐτὴν βιάζεται.

dee,

dee, the disciples of our Lord, seem ambitious that they might sit at our Lord's right and left hand in his kingdom; that they might not only be admitted into his kingdom, but have the greatest honour there. Thus 'tis remarkable, in Luke 16. where our Saviour is speaking to the same purpose as in the words of our text: he says, *Every man presseth into it*; that is, great numbers, almost every body, seem to be ambitious now to have an interest in the kingdom of God: for then the Jews had a great expectation of the glorious kingdom of the Messiah, which was prophesied of.

It may farther be extended to the importunity of that people to erect this kingdom: they would *by force have made Jesus a king* [b]. He was obliged to retire from them, that he might escape that honour they would have done him. And, when he entred into Jerusalem, *they spread branches of palm-trees before him, and cried Hosanna to him*; calling him *the king of Israel* [c]. They would have introduced this new state of things in such a manner as seemed most agreeable to their carnal dispositions; and *the violent* were ready to *take it by force*, and to erect a kingdom whether our Saviour would or no. If it be interpreted only with respect to the numbers who embrace the doctrine of the gospel; this may be very agreeable to what our Sa-

[b] John 6. 15. [c] *Chap.* 12. 13.

viour

viour here says, *Every one presseth into it.* And indeed the words of our text, by the Æthiopic version, are translated to this purpose: *Many violent persons take it by force.* And *all of them break in upon it*, as the Syriac renders it. Every man breaks in upon it, and endeavours to enter by force.

But some think, that by these words is express'd the character of the persons who, in a special manner, seem desirous and ambitious to obtain the kingdom of heaven; or to comply with the terms of the gospel. *The violent:* that is, say some, those who are counted violent men, such as extortioners, such as publicans, who oppress and vex others; such as soldiers, who live upon spoil and rapine: these are a sort of persons who *enter into the kingdom of heaven*; while those, who might rather have been expected to enter in, such as the Scribes and Pharisees, and doctors of the law, shut themselves out by their obstinacy and unbelief. These poor people, who seem the most unlikely in the world to seek an interest in the kingdom of heaven, obtain it. Agreeably to this, you find the centurion had extraordinary faith, when he came to Christ for the healing of his sick servant; insomuch that our Lord gives this testimony of him: *Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel* [g]. Here a Roman soldier shews more faith than was found among the Is-

[g] Mat. 8. 10.

raelites, who profeſs'd to be the people of God. The violent take the kingdom of heaven; ſuch men of violence as theſe. *But*, ſays Chriſt, *the children of the kingdom ſhall be caſt into outer darkneſs: there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth* [e]. "Here is one who "is not one of the children of the kingdom, "is not born or educated a Jew, and yet he "has more faith than the Iſraelites. He "receives my miniſtry;" as if Chriſt ſhould ſay, "he enters into the kingdom of heaven "ſooner than others." *The violent take it by force*; men who are given to rapine and ſpoil, to devour and oppreſs others. And ſo *publicans and harlots*, Chriſt ſaid, *went into the kingdom of heaven before the Scribes and Phariſees* [f]: the publicans, or tax-gatherers, who were extortioners and oppreſſors. See likewiſe Luke 3. where you'll find it thus began by the miniſtry of John the baptiſt: for, in the 12th verſe 'tis ſaid; *Then came alſo publicans to be baptized, and ſaid unto him, Maſter, what ſhall we do?* Ver. 13. *And he ſaid unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.* Theſe *violent* people came to ſubmit to John's baptiſm. *And the ſoldiers likewiſe demanded of him, ſaying, And what ſhall we do? And he ſaid unto them, Do violence to no man.* He tells theſe *violent* men, they ſhould *do violence to no man*; *neither accuſe any man falſely*; *and be content*

[e] Mat. 8. 12. [f] *Chap.* 21. 31.

with

with their wages [g]. These comply with the doctrine of the kingdom, tho so very unlikely to have submitted to it; whereas those, from whom more might have been reasonably hoped for, rejected the offers and terms of the gospel.

Agreeably to this, you may read what is said in Luke 7. where our Saviour is speaking of John the baptist after the same manner as in our context: *And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him* [h]. Thus Luke expresses it: and Matthew says, *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* The publicans, the violent persons, and the soldiers, such as these, sooner embrace the doctrine of the gospel than the Scribes and Pharisees.

Some interpret this to extend to the calling of the Gentiles. Such were divers of the soldiers, and other persons who embraced the gospel; as the Syrophenician woman, whose faith our Saviour so much extolled: *O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt* [i]. Thus some oppose these terms unto that pretence which the Jews had of being heirs of the kingdom: and therefore our Lord calls them, *the children*

[g] Luke 3. 14.
[h] Luke 7. 29, 30.
[i] Mat. 15. 28.

of the kingdom. And the apoſtle Paul ſays, *What advantage then hath the Jew, and what profit is there of circumciſion? Much every way; chiefly becauſe unto them were committed the oracles of God* [k]. Our Saviour preached firſt to the Jews, and ordered his diſciples to preach firſt to them; and therefore, after his aſcenſion, to *begin* their miniſtry *at Jeruſalem* [l]. Theſe were called *the children of the kingdom* [m]: the *promiſe* was *to them, and to their children* [n], in a ſpecial manner; the promiſe of the holy Spirit: and therefore 'twas poured forth firſt at Jeruſalem. Now, in oppoſition to theſe who were conſidered as heirs, the calling of the Gentiles, ſome think, is ſignified here by the *kingdom of heaven ſuffering violence:* for, in the days of John the baptiſt, there were ſome Gentiles, ſome ſoldiers; and ſo in the days of Chriſt, ſome who began *to take it by force*, who were reſolved to be intereſted in this happineſs and ſalvation, and to have it whatſoever it coſt them; while the children of the kingdom ſlighted, and were regardleſs of the great advantages of the goſpel. The kingdom of heaven was *ſnatched* out of their hands, as it were; for ſo the word [o] properly ſignifies, which is here rendered *take it by force.* As if he had ſaid: "People will wreſt from "you the kingdom of God; the very hea-

[k] Rom. 3. 1, 2.
[l] Luke 24. 47.
[m] Mat. 8. 12.
[n] Acts 2. 39.
[o] Ἁρπάζουσιν.

"thens

" thens and infidels will become true chriſ-
" tians, while you deſpiſe the goſpel of the
" kingdom: and this begins already to ap-
" pear, they are more ready to embrace the
" goſpel than the Scribes and Phariſees a-
" mong you." As if he ſhould ſay, " if you
" have not a care they will wreſt it out of
" your hands, if you don't duly conſider and
" improve the deſign of John's miniſtry, and
" prepare for the goſpel I am publiſhing to
" you; if you do not chearfully embrace
" the propoſals of grace in it; and if you
" will not enter into the marriage-ſupper,
" thoſe from the high-ways and hedges will:
" the violent will ſnatch the bleſſing from
" you by force, and will wreſt the privileges
" and advantages of the goſpel out of your
" hands."

But then, in the laſt place, it may ſignify the temper and diſpoſition of their minds in general, who would, in good earneſt, *ſeek the kingdom of God:* they muſt be perſons of courage and reſolution; they muſt uſe vigour, and ſteddineſs of mind. And ſo it may be taken to repreſent thoſe qualities which are neceſſary, if we will be chriſtians in good earneſt. *The kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence.* Who ſhall be partakers of this happineſs and privilege? who ſhall be ſubjects of this kingdom, and enjoy the privileges and advantages of it? Not thoſe who indulge themſelves in lazineſs and negligence; not the indolent and ſlothful, thoſe who take

no pains, who use no endeavours to obtain so great an advantage. They must be persons of vigour and application, of industry and courage: these are the people who shall be interested in the kingdom of God. And they were those of such a character who began to seize upon it. *From the days of John the baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven* is exhibited, it *suffereth violence:* it is exposed to people as a prize; but they must run, if they would have it; they must fight, or they can't conquer. They must persevere, they must go on: for, *if they set their hand to the plough, and then look back*, they declare themselves *unfit for the kingdom of God* [p].

And here may seem to be an allusion,

(1.) In the general, to a castle, or to a city which is stormed. *The kingdom of heaven*, John had told the people, *was at the door*; and Christ told them, he was *the Son of God*, and came to preach the doctrine of the kingdom: but they were not to enter in, as they imagined, without any more ado. There needed a preparation; there needed the mortification of sin, by the ministry of John, who preached repentance: and they needed to be prepared for this kingdom by the ministry of our Saviour, who taught them mortification and self-denial; and that they must take up the cross and follow him. There were difficulties in the way, *offences would come:* and many went away from Christ

[p] Luke 9. 62.

when

when they heard his doctrine, and found what self-denial it required. Thus the rich man in the gospel had not vigour of mind enough for the kingdom of God. *The kingdom of God suffers violence:* 'tis as a town or city, and it must be besieged; and none shall obtain it but those who are able to overcome difficulties, and endure trials. They must be exposed to dangers, they must surmount many and great obstacles, and use much diligence and application of mind. They must persist, and it must be taken by force; it must be stormed. Our Saviour compares it to a *strait gate*, and *narrow way*; and says, *many should seek to enter, and not be able* [q]. 'Tis a moral impotence: they have not the heart to deny themselves, and undergo that discipline our Lord enjoins; they cannot *forsake house, land, wife, and children, for his sake*; they can't *lay down their lives for him* [r]. They can make some appearance by their profession, but can bring forth no fruit: for *by and by they are offended* [s], like the *stony ground*, because of persecution.

(2.) Hereby may be farther intimated the great privilege and advantage of the dispensation of the gospel; and that our Saviour hereby signifies it is attainable. There are difficulties indeed in the way; but however a man may be interested in these great privileges notwithstanding. It *suffers violence*,

[q] Luke 13. 24.
[r] *Chap.* 14. 26.
[s] Mat. 13. 21.

but *the violent take it by force.* And ſo it may be ſpoken by way of oppoſition to what we find under the diſpenſation of the law: when all the people were gathered about the mount, in Exod. 19. they were forbid to approach, becauſe 'twas ſuitable to that diſpenſation they ſhould be kept at a diſtance. *Let not the prieſts and the people break thro' to come up unto the Lord, leſt he break forth upon them* [s]. *Let them not break thro':* the word the Septuagint uſes here [t], is the ſame with that in our text, let them not *offer violence*; they muſt keep their diſtance. Whereas *we are come to mount Sion,* ſays the apoſtle in Heb. 12. where he ſhews the difference between the ſtate of the goſpel, which is called *the kingdom of heaven,* and that of the law; and how much greater privileges we enjoy now than the Jews did then: *For ye are not come to the mount that might be touched,* &c. *but ye are come to mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, which are written in heaven; and to God, the judge of all; and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect; and to Jeſus, the mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of ſprinkling, that ſpeaketh better things than that of Abel:* better things than the ſprinkling of Abel's ſacrifice. *The kingdom of hea-*

[s] Exod. 19. 24.

[t] Οἱ δὲ ἱερεῖς καὶ ὁ λαὸς μὴ βιαζέσθωσαν ἀναβῆναι πρὸς τὸν θεόν. LXXII.

ven now *ſuffers violence.* You may preſs in upon it: and there is no ſuch inhibition, there is no ſuch reſtraint put upon you as was under the diſpenſation of the law; but you may obtain theſe great privileges if you have but a heart, but a reſolution to obtain them.

Some think there is an alluſion here to the entrance of the people of Iſrael into the land of Canaan. They were exhorted *to be of good courage* [u]; and not to regard the meſſage brought by the ſpies, that the ſons of Anak were ſo great that they appeared but as graſhoppers in compariſon of them. Thus as the children of Iſrael were to enter into Canaan in a military way, by force of arms, and in the exerciſe of courage and reſolution; ſo our Saviour compares our obtaining the kingdom of heaven with this. Notwithſtanding all the terrible things which appear in our way, we ought to be of good courage; for the kingdom of heaven is to be taken, as it were, in a military way: and thoſe who are reſolved, may obtain the great advantages which attend it. *The violent take it by force:* we muſt arm ourſelves therefore with courage and reſolution.

Thus have I explained to you the terms; *The kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* I proceed now to conſider,

[u] Numb. 13. 32. Deut. 31. 6.

2. The

2. The main things contained in theſe words: which are,

(1.) That a man who will devote himſelf to the ſervice of Chriſt, had need be poſſeſſed of a great deal of courage, reſolution, patience, and conſtancy; a vigorous frame of mind. If he will make any thing of religion, if he will belong to the kingdom of heaven, and be a diſciple of Chriſt, he muſt arm himſelf with theſe graces and virtues.

(2.) That thoſe who do make their attempts with that vigour and courage, and reſolution, which are hereby expreſſed, ſhall certainly prevail. *Our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.* It *ſuffers violence*; there's the attack: and *the violent take it by force*; there's the ſucceſs.

(1.) We are to conſider the temper of mind thoſe ought to have who would be chriſtians in good earneſt. If they would obtain an intereſt in *the kingdom of heaven*, they muſt conſider it muſt be ſtormed. Our bleſſed Saviour bids men *ſit down and count the coſt*, and tells them what religion is worth on the one hand, how excellent a thing it is; and, on the other hand, he acquaints them what it will coſt them, what they muſt part with, if they obtain it. He tells them great and glorious things of the kingdom of heaven: of *ſitting down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob* [v]; of *being owned by himſelf at the laſt day*, and being *brought into the joy of*

[v] Mat. 8. 11.

their

their Lord [w]: but he informs them, on the other hand, that they must *hate house and land, wife, and children, and their own lives* too [x], in comparison of what he proposes to them. He tells them, 'tis the part of a prudent man to *sit down first, and count the cost* [y]. 'Tis a great delusion for people to imagine, as some do, that 'tis so easy a thing to get to heaven, that they need only profess the true religion, whether they practise it or not. They will be mightily mistaken in the end, if they don't mend this error of their minds. 'Tis represented to us, in the scripture, as a work of great labour and industry: we must *run, if we would obtain* [z]. 'Tis *a race*; and we must *run with patience* [a]. We must *labour in our Lord's vineyard* [b], or else we shall not receive the wages: and tho some come later than others, yet all must labour. We must *be stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord* [c]. We must exercise the part of military men: we must *put on the whole armour of God* [d]; and, *as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we must endure hardships* [e], and inure ourselves to difficulties. We must *overcome principalities and powers; and spiritual wickednesses in high places.* We must conquer ourselves, and our own passions: we must *overcome the world.*

[w] Mat. 25. 34.
[x] Luke 14. 26.
[y] Ver. 28.
[z] 1 Cor. 9. 24.
[a] Heb. 12. 1.
[b] Mat. 20. 1.
[c] 1 Cor. 15. 58.
[d] Eph. 6. 11.
[e] 2 Tim. 2. 3.

This

This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith [f]. When our Saviour says, *the kingdom of heaven suffers violence*, he shews there is need of exerting great vigour; and that intimates there are difficulties and dangers in the way. Our own imaginations will represent to us great dangers, and so will the enemies of our souls: and our Saviour himself declares they are not inconsiderable difficulties; and therefore we must arm ourselves with confidence, that we shall have the divine assistance. But we must not think that heaven is obtained without care, without thought, without deliberation, without a great deal of industry and application of mind, without a great deal of courage and resolution: for experience, as well as the word of God, testifies the same; the experience of christians in all ages, who have met with great opposition in this spiritual warfare by the reluctancy of human nature, by persecutors amongst men, and by evil spirits; so that they have found there was the greatest occasion imaginable to rally their spirits, to encourage themselves in the Lord their God, to *watch and be sober* [g], to *keep their garments* [h], and to use all the proper means which God has instituted for the purpose; to use the help of others, their counsel and direction, that they might *be able to stand*

[f] 1 John 5. 4.
[g] 1 Thess. 5. 6.
[h] Rev. 16. 15.

with

with their loins girt [i], *and their lamps burning* [k].

I might eaſily repreſent to you how neceſſary it is for perſons thus to do, if I ſhould give you a deſcription of the weakneſs of our own minds, our proneneſs to temptation, the remainder of corruption in our hearts, the force of evil examples, our own negligence and ſtupidity ſometimes when in danger, the general courſe of the world; and how eaſily men are perſuaded to things whereby they may indulge their eaſe and their ſloth. And if I ſhould repreſent, on the other hand, the violent temptations, the perſecutions men muſt undergo when they are called *to reſiſt unto blood*, the violence which muſt be done to our natural affections, when we muſt abandon our neareſt relations for the ſake of Chriſt; if this ſhould be done, you would eaſily diſcern that there needs a great deal of chriſtian bravery and reſolution to overcome in this ſiege. And tho ſome make their attack in a place of more difficulty than others, if I may ſo expreſs it; yet all have their difficulties. Indeed there is nothing preſcribed to us in religion but what is very reaſonable and juſt, and ſo *the ways of God* are in themſelves *ways of pleaſantneſs, and paths of peace* [l]: but yet this is certain, that there are great difficulties and trials to be encountered with in the way; and we

[i] 1 Pet. 1. 13.
[k] Mat. 25. 1.
[l] Prov. 3. 17.

had

had need therefore have great ſtrength and reſolution to overcome them.

But I content myſelf with giving you a general account of theſe things, becauſe I would proceed to what I farther propoſed: and that is,

(2.) To obſerve, that here is an aſſurance of ſucceſs ſignified by this expreſſion, *The violent take it by force.* It is attacked, but it is not impregnable. Some of the moſt unlikely perſons in the world, ſome of the moſt unworthy, ſuch as the ſoldiers, ſuch as the publicans, theſe entred into the kingdom of God; theſe would not go without it. As Jacob ſaid to the angel, *I will not let thee go, unleſs thou bleſs me* [m]; ſo the Syrophenician woman preſſed into the kingdom of heaven with ſuch ardour and vehemence, that our Lord cries out, with admiration, *O woman, great is thy faith* [n]. No repulſe would make her lay aſide her hope; but ſtill ſhe goes on with reſolution and vigour. And ſo muſt we, if we would in good earneſt obtain heaven: we muſt be reſolved that we will have it, whatſoever it coſt us; that we will be the diſciples of Chriſt, whatſoever we meet with: and, if ſo, we ſhall be ſucceſsful; *the violent take it by force.* God ſuffers himſelf to be prevailed upon by ſuch importunate perſons. The reaſon why men do not *obtain*, is, becauſe they don't *ſeek* [o]; don't

[m] Gen. 32. 26.
[n] Mat. 15. 28.
[o] *Chap.* 7. 8.

follow

follow their reſearch after the manner they ought to do. 'Tis true, we are impotent creatures, and unable to perform this of ourſelves: and there may be a formidable character made of this matter, like that the ſpies repreſented of the land of Canaan; *'tis full of walled cities, and there are giants in it* [p]. But when we conſider, *greater is he that is for us, than he that is againſt us* [q]; *he is faithful that hath promiſed* [r]; and *God will give his holy Spirit to thoſe who* ſincerely *ask it* [s]; when we conſider that Chriſt has conquered our ſpiritual enemies already, and will *make us more than conquerors* [s]; when we conſider, that tho we have diſcouragements in the way, yet we have motives which are greater, we have the hope of eternal life; tho we are weak in ourſelves, we *can do all things thro' Chriſt which ſtrengtheneth us* [t]; tho naked, and unarmed, and ſo liable to become an eaſy prey to our enemies, yet when we have *put on the whole armour of God, we ſhall be able to ſtand* [u]: *the violent will take it by force.* There will ſucceſs attend us; there is the divine promiſe. And experience ſhews the ſame; that thoſe who have appeared weak on other occaſions, have appeared ſtrong when they have armed themſelves after this manner. When we are ready to ſink, the divine arm will be a ſtay to us:

[p] Numb. 13. 28.
[q] 1 John 4. 4.
[r] Heb. 10. 23.
[s] Luke 11. 13.
[s] Rom. 8. 37.
[t] Phil. 4. 13.
[u] Eph. 6. 11.

therefore

therefore we have the utmoſt reaſon to reſolve upon the obtaining this great advantage, an intereſt in the kingdom of God; to reſolve to be the diſciples of Chriſt, whatſoever we may be called to do or ſuffer: and how ſelf-denying ſoever our duties may be, that we will not be diſcouraged at any difficulties in the way. Succeſs will crown our labours. The way we muſt go is indeed attended with ſome difficulties; but it will terminate in a ſtate of everlaſting glory and felicity.

I ſhould now have made ſome reflections upon what has been ſaid; but the latter part of this diſcourſe you ſee being deſigned to direct our practice, I ſhall need ſay the leſs. However,

1. It ſhews us they are mightily miſtaken who think they are the diſciples of Chriſt becauſe they are born of chriſtian parents, or are inſtructed in the principles of the chriſtian religion. They pretend they are true chriſtians; whereas they have made no effort againſt ſin and temptation, never conſidered the terms which Chriſt propoſes, know nothing what belongs to ſelf-denial, have no diſpoſition to do any thing for the ſake of Chriſt. They may flatter themſelves, and others flatter them as they pleaſe; but they will find, if ever they enter into the kingdom of grace here, ſo as to be intitled to glory, *the kingdom of heaven muſt ſuffer violence, and*

and the violent must take it by force: they must have a firm resolution of mind, a great deal of perseverance. And we cannot have that resolution, unless we prefer the kingdom of heaven above all other interests whatsoever. Nor will a few languid endeavours succeed in this matter; but there is an absolute necessity of exerting our utmost strength and vigour: and we shall soon be convinced of this, if we do but consider that it is a matter of the last importance; that it is obstructed by many and great oppositions and difficulties; that the more vigorously we exert our powers in the divine service, the more we glorify the great giver of them; and that the opportunity for this service is very short and uncertain.

2. It shews, on the other hand, that they are mightily mistaken who are ready almost to think that 'tis a way impracticable; are ready to form to themselves such difficulties, as if it would be a vain thing to be religious. How many have complained, that they were assaulted with so many temptations, filled with so much corruption, surrounded with so many objects to seduce them, and that they found it so difficult to overcome evil habits; that they have been ready to think hard of the christian religion, and to call Christ an austere master, and to say his yoke is not easy? This is for want of understanding the nature of christianity; for there is nothing unreasonable that Christ has im-

poſed. This is for want of reliſhing the delights and pleaſures of religion. 'Tis for want of conſidering that it becomes rational creatures to make the attempt, if the ſucceſs were but barely poſſible; that wonderful things have been done by reſolved perſons; that others have often ſucceeded, and come off victorious in the ſame warfare; that the divine aid is promiſed; and that notwithſtanding the great difficulty there is of breaking off evil habits, yet when they are, by the aſſiſtance of God's grace, broken, and contrary habits govern our minds, then it will be more eaſy to walk in the way of holineſs than of ſin. They don't conſider that 'twill be worth the while to undergo ſome fatigue at preſent for a ſtate of everlaſting life. If men will forego their preſent pleaſures for ſome future temporal advantage; is it not worth the while to endure ſome toil and labour, ſome application of mind, for the ſake of preſent peace of conſcience, and an everlaſting peace in the end? In one word, the greater difficulties we chearfully encounter in our chriſtian courſe, the more we diſcover our love to God, and the greater will be our reward; which will undoubtedly be proportioned to the difficulties we ſurmount in the way.

Let thoſe then, who have engaged themſelves under the banner of Chriſt, and are willing to ſtorm the kingdom of heaven, *be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*;

might [v]; improve their advantage, and not be discouraged at what they meet with in the way. *In due time they shall reap, if they faint not* [w].

And let those who never yet firmly resolved to become his disciples, consider well of the matter, and see whether 'tis not worth the while, since there is a certainty of success. In this *spiritual warfare* we shall certainly be *more than conquerors* [x]. If we attend to our duty, we shall certainly share the spoil, and partake in the triumph at last. Therefore since certain victory attends us, let us all arm ourselves with the same confidence, that we may obtain the same advantage.

[v] Eph. 6. 10.
[w] Gal. 6. 9.
[x] Rom. 8. 37.

SERMON XII.

Preach'd at *PINNERS-HALL*, Feb. 3, 170$\frac{4}{5}$.

PROV. xxiii. 23.

The former part of the verſe.

Buy the truth, and ſell it not.

The firſt SERMON on this text.

WHILE every man is ſeeking his gain, and endeavouring to take a true and juſt proſpect of his advantage in his converſe and commerce in the world, 'tis great pity that ſo few are concerned about that which is in itſelf the moſt valuable; how they may gain thoſe ſpiritual bleſſings which will be of an eternal advantage to them: while there are ſo many ſollicitous thoughts in the minds of men about *what they ſhall eat, and what they ſhall drink, and what they ſhall put on* [y], and how they ſhall have wherewith to procure theſe temporal accommodations; that no more are concerned for their ſouls, how they ſhall be fed, refreſhed and

[y] Mat. 6. 25.

nouriſhed;

nouriſhed; and how theſe ſhall be clothed and adorned: as if their better part were to be moſt neglected, and were unworthy of their care and thoughts; as if man was made for nothing elſe but to provide a ſuſtenance for himſelf while he is here, and under no neceſſity to concern himſelf how he ſhall ſubſiſt and live in another world: tho it is of ſmall conſequence how our bodies are accommodated in compariſon of the great importance of the accommodation of our ſouls; and tho time is nothing when compared with eternity. While others therefore are *every one ſeeking his gain*, his temporal gain *from his own quarter* [z]; while all mankind, as to temporal things, are ſaying, *Who will ſhew us any good* [a]? and inquiring what profit there is in ſuch a courſe of life, or in ſuch a trade or employment; it becomes us to attend to the voice of God, who propoſes to us the beſt of bargains, the greateſt of advantages. While others are buſying themſelves with the things of this world, let us hearken to the voice of wiſdom itſelf, which will teach us what is the moſt valuable thing, and where we ſhall find our greateſt intereſt and advantage. While others propoſe to themſelves temporal gain, and how their corn, and their wine, and their flocks, and the like, may abound; let us propoſe to ourſelves how our ſouls may be

[z] Iſa. 56. 11.

[a] Pſal. 4. 6.

advantaged, how we may be made happy here to a good degree, and perfectly and eternally happy hereafter. The only way to be thus happy and bleſſed will be to make a wiſe improvement of our preſent time, in driving this bargain which is propoſed to us in the words of our text, to *buy the truth, and not to ſell it.*

Commerce is one great band of human ſociety. Men find it their common advantage to trade with one another; and this not only links and ties families and cities, but even diſtant nations together: and how glad are men to entertain a correſpondence with thoſe who can ſupply them with any commodities of advantage? ſometimes tho they furniſh them only with things which are for ornament, for pomp, or for pride. But how much more is commerce deſirable, when thoſe things are brought which are neceſſary for the ſupport of human life? when corn is brought to a nation which is ready to be famiſhed becauſe of ſcarcity; or clothing to thoſe who are deſtitute of raiment? when arms are brought to a people who are naked and defenſeleſs, and under the immediate apprehenſions of the hoſtile approach of a powerful neighbour? Such things as theſe are in a ſpecial manner looked upon as valuable; and every one would be willing to furniſh himſelf with goods of this kind. But all that may recommend temporal things unto men, and may engage them

them to trade, are nothing in compariſon to thoſe ſpiritual bleſſings which are repreſented to us in the ſcriptures under the name of *truth*, and the like. And therefore moſt welcome ſhould be ſuch an exhortation as this, a propoſal ſo profitable. *It is a true and faithful ſaying, 'tis worthy of all acceptation* [b]; becauſe we ſhall be miſerable without the bleſſing which is here propoſed to us. Here is a bargain therefore of the higheſt conſequence repreſented to us in the text, and it becomes us accordingly to embrace it.

There is no need that I ſhould inſiſt on the words which precede theſe, there ſeeming to be no dependance between them. As 'tis common in this book of Proverbs, which chiefly conſiſts of ſhort maxims and ſayings, which, as they are deſign'd for our uſe on a variety of occurrences, and ſhould for that end be treaſured up in our memories, and frequently thought on; ſo they do not ſtrictly depend upon one another. This then muſt be looked upon as ſuch a proverbial ſpeech; a thing to be frequently remembred, and to be conſtantly put in practice by us: this is to be a rule to us, a maxim from which we are not to deviate upon any occaſion. Remember, we are to *buy the truth, and not to ſell it.*

In diſcourſing on this text, I ſhall endeavour,

[b] 1 Tim. 1. 15.

I. To explain the terms which are uſed in it.

II. To perſuade you to embrace the good bargain which is here propoſed.

I. I ſhall endeavour to explain the terms: by ſhewing what is meant by *truth*; what we are to underſtand by *buying the truth*, to which we are exhorted; and what by *ſelling the truth*, which is prohibited to us.

1. We are to inquire what is meant by *truth*.

You know that *truth* has various acceptations in the holy ſcripture; and when it regards mankind, as you ſee it does here, I think they may be reduced to two.

Either hereby is ſignified the true doctrine, true notions of things, which is objective truth; or elſe hereby is ſignified, ſubjectively, that truth which is in any man, in his mind, in his heart, which inheres in him, and is therefore a virtue or a grace. The former ſignifies truth, as it is the object of our underſtanding; the latter ſignifies honeſty and ſincerity, which is a grace or virtue of the heart.

You will find it is in many places taken in both theſe ſenſes. In John 3. 21. it is taken for fidelity, or honeſty and ſincerity, integrity of heart; *But he that doth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifeſt that they are wrought in God. He that doth the truth*; that is, who acts truly,

uprightly, honeſtly and ſincerely, he is willing his works ſhould be expoſed to the light. And ſo the apoſtle Paul, Phil. 1. 18. ſpeaks of truth in the ſame ſenſe: *What then? notwithſtanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Chriſt is preached. Whether in pretence*; that is, only in pretence, or ſincerely and uprightly, with a good and honeſt deſign.

As to the other ſenſe, namely, true doctrine, true notions of things; that this is ſignified by truth, you find frequently in the ſcripture. And becauſe God is the fountain and original of truth, therefore he is called truth. And our Lord Jeſus is ſaid to be truth itſelf: *I am the way, the truth, and the life* [c]. The word of God is the great inſtrument for the revealing of the greateſt and moſt important truths; therefore 'tis called *the word of truth*; and ſometimes 'tis ſaid to be *the truth. Thy loving kindneſs have I ſet before mine eyes, and I have walked in thy truth* [d]: that is what elſewhere is called a *walking in the law of the Lord* [e], according to the rule of his ſacred word. So our Lord Jeſus Chriſt prays for his diſciples; *Sanctify them thro' thy truth, thy word is truth* [f]. And you will find, under this character, the word of God is ſpoken of in the 119th Pſalm, in ſeveral places. *I have choſen the way of truth; thy judgments have I*

[c] John 14. 3.
[d] Pſal. 26. 3.
[e] Neh. 10. 29.
[f] John 17. 17.

laid

laid before me [g]. *Thy righteouſneſs is an everlaſting righteouſneſs; and thy law is the truth* [h]. *Thou art near, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth* [i]. And as the law of God, or the word of God in general, is called *the truth*, becauſe thoſe true notions and doctrines, and precepts are contained in it, which are to inform our minds, and to direct our lives; ſo the goſpel is eminently called *the truth*. I ſay, the goſpel is eminently called *the truth*, becauſe there is ſo much of divine truth and knowledge contained therein, and explained thereby. So Epheſ. 4. 21. the goſpel is called *the truth as it is in Jeſus*. And John 1. 17. *The law was given by Moſes, but grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt*. The goſpel is called *grace*, becauſe of the manifeſtation of God's free will, his gracious purpoſe of ſaving ſinners, tho infinitely unworthy of his mercy: and 'tis called *truth*, becauſe of the eminent diſcovery of the divine perfections, and other great and important truths which are of the higheſt conſequence to men. 'Tis called *truth* likewiſe in oppoſition to the law: not that the law was falſe, but that part of the law which was ceremonial was a ſhadow. A ſhadow is not the ſubſtance; a picture is not the true face: and accordingly the law being but *a ſhadow of good things to come* [k], and the goſpel repreſenting Chriſt as come,

[g] Pſal. 119. 30.
[h] Ver. 142.
[i] Ver. 151.
[k] Col. 2. 17.

repre-

repreſenting the body and ſubſtance; this diſpenſation is much more glorious than the other, and therefore is called *the truth.* Their tabernacle was a typical tabernacle; but 'tis *the true tabernacle which God has pitched, and not man* [l]. Their ſacrifices were typical ſacrifices: but our Lord is the true ſacrifice; a ſacrifice which is effectual, and has virtue to the purpoſe of making atonement for ſin, of reconciling God to ſinners, and engaging him to paſs by their offences, and receive them again into his favour.

Now when Chriſt is called *truth*, regard is had unto him, as he is the fountain of truth and life: when the word of God is called *truth*, regard is had to the word as the great inſtrument of communicating it: there is a reſpect to the law in a degree, and to the goſpel in a greater, as containing a more ample diſcovery of thoſe things which are moſt eminent in their importance. Thus our Lord Jeſus ſays, *God will have ſuch to worſhip him that ſhall worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth* [m]. *In truth:* one interpretation whereof may be, worſhip him according to the true light of the goſpel, and not according to the ſhadows and ceremonies of the law. So when we obey the goſpel, we are ſaid to *obey the truth.* To this purpoſe the apoſtle Peter ſays, that we *have purified our ſouls in obeying the truth* [n]. And

[l] Heb. 8. 2.
[m] John 4. 24.
[n] 1 Pet. 1. 22.

in

in the ſame ſenſe the apoſtle Paul blames the Galatians: *O fooliſh Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you ſhould not obey the truth* [a]?

If you ask in what ſenſe we are to take this in our text: tho 'tis certainly true that ſincerity, and honeſty and integrity, is worth purchaſing, for 'tis an eminent virtue and grace; yet the text ſeems to have a more comprehenſive ſenſe, and to regard truth as it is objectively propoſed to us; that we ſhould have a value for all true principles and notions, or doctrines which are contained in the word of God, which is the word of truth; that we ſhould ſo eſteem theſe as to *buy them, and not to ſell them.* As this is a very comprehenſive ſenſe, ſo it is plain and obvious. And tho when the wiſe man wrote, the mind of God was not ſo clearly explained as under the new-teſtament-diſpenſation; yet if there was reaſon for him to ſpeak after this manner in a time of leſs light, there is a greater force added to the exhortation under the more glorious adminiſtration of the goſpel. For 'tis a ſtanding and undoubted maxim in all ages, that we ſhould *buy the truth, and ſell it not.*

As *truth* comprehends the whole which is contained in the divine word, the whole of divine revelation; ſo you ſee it ſignifies as much as the true religion. And if the queſtion be about any particular doctrine or pre-

[a] Gal. 3. 1.

cept

cept which belongs to the true religion; this maxim is ſtill of force, that that particular precept, that particular doctrine is to be *bought*, and *not to be ſold*. 'Tis true therefore of the whole body of religion, whether under one diſpenſation or another, provided it be the true religion. 'Tis true of the whole, and true of every part: every part of *truth* is to be *bought*, and *not* to be *ſold*.

It is in this comprehenſive ſenſe therefore that I take the words to be intended by the wiſe man: and this ſeems to be confirmed by thoſe which follow in the ſame verſe. *Buy the truth, and ſell it not; alſo wiſdom, and inſtruction, and underſtanding.* *Alſo* is a ſupplement of the tranſlators, which had better have been left out. *Buy the truth, and ſell it not.* Would you know what is meant by the truth? *Wiſdom, inſtruction, and underſtanding.* What is that *wiſdom, inſtruction, and underſtanding*, which are ſo often recommended in the book of the Proverbs, but true religion? Several names are given to it, *wiſdom, inſtruction, and underſtanding*; but either ſignifying the ſame thing, or elſe the ſeveral parts thereof. By one of theſe terms may be ſignified that which we call *knowledge*; a right perception or notion of things: by another may be intended the improvement of the capacity of the mind; a man is ſaid to have *wiſdom* who has a capacity of perceiving and penetrating, and, when light is afforded to him,

is

is capable of making an improvement thereby: and by the other of these terms may be signified prudence, or that virtue whereby a man governs and conducts himself according to those good rules which are prescribed to him, and those good notions he has imbibed in his mind. Now *truth* may be affirmed to be all of these; or either of these may be called *truth*. That man acts according to truth, who, when he has perceived right notions, has a capacity of receiving them; and when he has received them, acts prudently according to them. And therefore you are to understand by *truth* not only the information of the mind, but that which is the consequence of divine truth, when it takes place in the soul as it ought to do; the regulation of the heart, of the passions and affections, and the good government of a man's life. For true religion is not an empty notion: the design of it is not only to inform mens minds, and to give them just notions of things; but to reform their hearts, to subdue their disorderly passions, to bring them to good reason, and to engage them to submit to the conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ. And he makes known truth to this purpose, and is himself called *truth:* and is called *wisdom* in the 8th chapter of this book, to shew that he is the author and original of all true wisdom; and, in a special manner, of that divine knowledge which is of the highest consequence to the souls of men.

So

So that, in ſhort, the *truth*, which is here in this figurative manner expoſed to ſale, is the true religion, as it is calculated and adjuſted to the information of our minds, and to the reformation of our hearts and lives, whether it be in one diſpenſation or in another: but by how much the more clearly truth is propoſed to us, ſo much the ſtronger is the obligation upon us *to buy it*, and *not to ſell it*.

2. What is it to *buy the truth?* To *buy* does not ſignify, in this proverbial ſpeech, that we have any thing which can be a conſideration equally valuable to the truth which is propoſed unto us, and as it were expoſed to ſale. All that we have is nothing comparatively to *the truth*. One may ſay, as the wiſe man ſays of love, *If a man would give all the ſubſtance of his houſe to purchaſe it, it would utterly be contemned* [p]. If a juſt price were to be inſiſted on, we have nothing to offer. Nor is it hereby underſtood, that what we have to offer, can be of any advantage to him who propoſes truth to us. God is the author of truth. When men expoſe a thing to ſale, if any are deſirous to buy it, they expect ſome advantage for what they ſell; but this is a ſort of *buying without money and without price*, as the prophet Iſaiah ſpeaks: *Ho every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk*

[p] Cant. 8. 7.

without

without money and without price [q]. Nor is it hereby understood that we can do any thing in a way of merit in the least, which may procure to us this good, this advantage of truth. As we have nothing which can rise up to its value, so we have nothing meritorious in the least degree. As *our goodness does not extend to God* [r], we can give him no advantage. *Can a man be profitable to God* [s]? *If thou art righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thine hand* [s]? So neither can we profit ourselves by way of merit; we can't procure this advantage to ourselves by any thing that we can do. What have we to offer, upon which to plead any thing of merit? *We must say*, even when we do the best, *we are unprofitable servants* [t]. And what are we then when we do the worst? We do no more, nor so much as we should do, when we do the best. We do less than our duty on many occasions; and often we transgress against the divine laws: therefore there is nothing intimated by this term of *buying*, that we have any merit to plead with God.

But hereby is signified, that as men will be at great charge and expence to procure to themselves things which are of great importance and advantage; so we must earnestly desire truth: we must, with the warmest incli-

[q] Isa. 55. 1.
[r] Psal. 16. 2.
[s] Job 22. 2.
[s] Chap. 35. 7.
[t] Luke 17. 10.

nations,

nations, aſpire after true, that is, divine knowledge and underſtanding. We muſt ſeek it induſtriouſly; we muſt be at ſome coſt and pains; we muſt think nothing too dear to part with upon that account. This is plainly the meaning of *buying the truth:* we muſt be willing to part with that which may ſeem valuable to us, or valuable to others, who don't know how to make a juſt eſtimate of the truth; whatſoever it be, or whatſoever price men may put upon it, we muſt think it as dung and droſs, and not worthy to be compared with the knowledge of God. And theſe terms are uſed elſewhere in the ſcripture; as in that of Iſaiah 55. mentioned before. So in the Revelation, God counſels the church of the Laodiceans, by the apoſtle John, *to buy of him* thoſe great advantages there mentioned: *I counſel thee*, ſays he, *to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayeſt be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame of thy nakedneſs do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-ſalve, that thou mayeſt ſee* [u].

If you ask me what it is to ſell, becauſe we are forbidden to *ſell the truth*, as well as commanded to buy it: whereas buying ſignifies, that by all means in the world we are to ſeek to obtain it, and to ſpare no pains to furniſh ourſelves with it; ſo the prohibition, to *ſell the truth*, ſignifies that we are not to

[u] Rev. 3. 18.

part with the truth in general, the true religion, or any one point of it; we are not to part with any one precept of the law of God, any one article of the true religion. We are to have a juſt value for truth, to do all we can to acquire it; and when it is acquired, we are by no means in the world to part with it. Whatſoever pretences are uſed, whatſoever overtures are made by thoſe who would get it out of our hands, we ſhould eſteem it as a treaſure which can never be valued enough, and therefore never to be parted with. Naboth would, upon no terms, part with his vineyard, but would rather loſe his life than his inheritance, which he had derived from his anceſtors [w]: and if we have derived truth from a divine original, from our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, it ſhould, on this account, be eſteemed ſacred by us; and we ſhould by no means part with it. The wiſe man therefore, in many places, exhorts that it be kept with the greateſt diligence: we are not to think any one can lay down a price ſufficient, or propoſe any other thing as an equivalent for it. We are not to be cheated of this treaſure; *Let no man take thy crown* [x]. We are to keep our ornaments, our crown, our treaſure, and by no means in the world to be cheated of them by the cunning deceit of men; by no means to accept of any

[w] 1 Kings 21. [x] Rev. 3. 11.

worldly

worldly propoſal, if it be to part with the truth.

To ſhew you that this is clearly the ſenſe of the wiſe man, and to prepare my way to the other part of the diſcourſe; it will be proper for me to obſerve, that there are ſeveral paſſages in this book wherein he exhorts to the ſame thing in ſubſtance, commends truth as a vaſt treaſure, and never to be parted with. Thus in the firſt chapter he ſays: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools deſpiſe wiſdom and inſtruction. My ſon, hear the inſtruction of thy father, and forſake not the law of thy mother: for they ſhall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. My ſon, if ſinners entice thee, conſent thou not* [y]. And again: *My ſon, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; ſo that thou incline thine ear unto wiſdom, and apply thine heart to underſtanding: yea, if thou crieſt after knowledge, and lifteſt up thy voice for underſtanding: if thou ſeekeſt her as ſilver, and ſearcheſt for her as for hid treaſures: then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God* [z], &c. As it is the duty of the miniſters of God's word to recommend the truth to the ſons of men with the moſt lively warmth and earneſtneſs; and indeed *beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of thoſe*

[y] Prov. 1. 7——10. [z] *Chap.* 2. 1——5.

who thus bring the tidings of ſalvation [a] : ſo we ſhould likewiſe cry with an earneſt deſire after it, and ſeek it with as much importunity as the miniſters of the goſpel propoſe it to us, as worthy of our acceptation. Again, Solomon ſays; *Happy is the man that findeth wiſdom, and the man that getteth underſtanding : for the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of ſilver; and the gain thereof than fine gold.* Here is the beſt, the moſt advantageous commerce in the world. Men know the value of gold and ſilver, and therefore they will be eaſily induced to make a bargain when theſe are propoſed upon any reaſonable terms: they know the conſtant ſtated value of theſe metals. How deſirable then ſhould wiſdom be, when 'tis more valuable, more durable, and of a more ſteady account than theſe? *She is more precious than rubies : and all the things thou canſt deſire, are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her : and happy is every one that retaineth her* [b]. And farther: *My ſon, keep ſound wiſdom and diſcretion : let not them depart from thine eyes. So ſhall they be life unto thy ſoul, and grace to thy neck. Then ſhalt thou walk in thy way ſafely, and thy foot ſhall*

[a] Iſa. 52. 7. | [b] Prov. 3. 13——18.

not

not ſtumble. When thou lieſt down, thou ſhalt not be afraid: yea, thou ſhalt lie down, and thy ſleep ſhall be ſweet [c]. *Get wiſdom, get underſtanding: forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forſake her not, and ſhe ſhall preſerve thee: love her, and ſhe ſhall keep thee. Wiſdom is the principal thing, therefore get wiſdom: and with all thy getting, get underſtanding. Exalt her, and ſhe ſhall promote thee: ſhe ſhall bring thee to honour, when thou doſt embrace her. She ſhall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory ſhall ſhe deliver to thee. Hear, O my ſon, and receive my ſayings; and the years of thy life ſhall be many* [d]. *When thou goeſt, thy ſteps ſhall not be ſtraitned; and when thou runneſt, thou ſhalt not ſtumble. Take faſt hold of inſtruction, let her not go; keep her, for ſhe is thy life* [e]. And again: *Doth not wiſdom cry? and underſtanding put forth her voice? She ſtandeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the ſons of men. O ye ſimple, underſtand wiſdom* [f], &c. And then afterwards: *Receive my inſtruction, and not ſilver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wiſdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be deſired, are not to be compared to*

[c] Prov. 3. 21——24.
[d] *Chap.* 4. 5——10.
[e] Ver. 12, 13.
[f] *Chap.* 8. 1——5.

it [g]. *I love them that love me; and thoſe that ſeek me early ſhall find me. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteouſneſs. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice ſilver. I lead in the way of righteouſneſs, in the midſt of the paths of judgment: that I may cauſe thoſe that love me to inherit ſubſtance; and I will fill their treaſures* [h].

Here is an ample account how great an advantage it is to *buy wiſdom*, to *buy the truth*; and of how great importance it is to keep it, *not to ſell it*, not to part with it. *Keep it, for 'tis thy life* [i]: ſearch after it, and ſeek it with the greateſt diligence, and at the greateſt expence; and upon no terms, upon no propoſal, for no temporal advantage whatſoever, be perſuaded to part with it.

Having thus explained the import of the terms uſed in theſe words; I ſhall apply myſelf,

II. To perſuade you to accept of this offer: to make this a rule and maxim to yourſelves while you converſe in the world; upon all occaſions *to ſeek after truth* with this earneſtneſs and diligence; to endeavour to acquire it, whatever the coſt and pains be; and never to part with it upon any propoſal which can be made to you.

[g] Prov. 8. 10, 11.
[h] Ver. 17.——21.
[i] Prov. 4. 13.

And

And this I ſhall do by ſhewing you the great advantage of *buying*, and the great diſadvantage of *ſelling the truth.*

'Tis a right maxim, that a man ought to be governed by that which is his true intereſt and advantage. But how many are there who miſtake their own intereſt, and drive therefore the worſt bargains in the world? But every thing which religion propoſes, is not only for our real but our greateſt advantage, if men could be perſuaded to believe it. I ſhall ſhew you then, how great an advantage it will be to us to *buy the truth.* Which will appear if we conſider,

1. That it is in itſelf infinitely valuable.

2. That as it is thus valuable in itſelf, ſo it is of the greateſt uſe and advantage to us.

3. That whatſoever price be demanded of us, or whatſoever expence we are at in acquiring of it, 'tis infinitely below the true worth and value of it.

All theſe things correſponding together, muſt needs make it a demonſtration that it is a good bargain. If the thing propoſed to us is very valuable in itſelf, if it be of the higheſt uſe and advantage to us, and we have the greateſt occaſion for it in the world; and if we can't poſſibly out-bid ourſelves, and whatſoever is demanded of us, or whatſoever we can offer for it, is infinitely below the true worth of it, and the advan-

tages we shall receive thereby; every one sees it must be worth the while *to buy the truth, and not to part with it.*

1. 'Tis infinitely valuable in itself. In Prov. 8. *Wisdom*, which may signify the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, but withal signifies a divine perfection, speaks of *being with God from eternity, and before he laid the foundations of the earth*; speaks of *being with him*, and *conducting the world by him.* Wisdom, knowledge, and truth, are divine perfections. God himself is happy in the enjoyment and the perception of truth: he sees all truth in himself; for he is *the God of truth:* he is truth, wisdom, and knowledge itself; and all communications of truth are from him. *If any man want wisdom, let him ask it of God* [k]: 'tis he who giveth wisdom, knowledge, and understanding: 'tis he who gives it to angels and men, who are the only rational creatures which we find he has made. Now this must needs be a valuable thing in itself: all knowledge, all true knowledge is very valuable. *Every good and perfect gift comes from God* [l]: it is a noble capacity which God has given man, that he is a rational creature, and capable of being informed and instructed of many great truths. But what are the truths of philosophy, what is the knowledge of arts and sciences, in comparison of the great and important truths of

[k] James 1. 5. [l] Ver. 17.

religion?

religion? As for the knowledge of philosophy, the knowledge of languages, the knowledge of arts and sciences; what will these avail a man in regard of his interest in the world to come, if he be ignorant of *the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent? whom to know is life eternal* [m]. Tho knowledge be desirable in itself, yet the truth which those persons obtain and acquire who are only conversant about the motions of the stars, or the parts of human bodies, or are measuring the world, and inquiring into the nature and constitution of the several creatures therein; tho this kind of truth be valuable and useful, yet 'tis not by any means to be compared with that greater and more important knowledge, the knowledge which religion affords, how we may have our sins pardoned, and be reconciled to God; how we may be conformed to his image, be happy in him, and be made partakers of his glory. This is the knowledge, this the truth which is proposed to us in the words of our text. 'Tis valuable in itself; for 'tis great and noble, and excellent: and therefore God himself recommends it to us. Our Lord and Saviour who communicates it, calls himself *the way, the truth, and the life* [n]. The angels themselves desire to look into these truths, tho they are not so immediately concerned in them as we. The truths are valuable in

[m] John 17. 3. | [n] *Chap.* 14. 6.

them-

themſelves, and highly valuable, becauſe the divine attributes and perfections are ſo much manifeſted and diſplayed to men thereby. Therefore 'tis worthy the curioſity of angels to inquire into theſe important matters, the way of man's ſalvation, and how men ſhould be changed and renewed in the ſpirit of their mind; the way how ſinners ſhould be turned to God, and how they may be regulated and conformed to his will. But then,

2. If truth be ſo valuable in itſelf, and therefore ought to be ſo to us; how much more ſo in regard of the advantage and uſe of it to us, the profit which redounds to us hereby? We commonly take an eſtimate of the value of a thing from the advantage we receive from it. If a man purchaſe an eſtate, or a jewel, or any thing elſe; 'tis becauſe it is valuable in itſelf, or becauſe he expects to receive ſome advantage by it. Sometimes a thing may be valuable in itſelf, and yet not ſo valuable to us, becauſe we may have no occaſion for it; no occaſion for a jewel, which may be valuable to a prince. But as truth is valuable in itſelf, ſo 'tis of the higheſt advantage to all thoſe who embrace it. A great many of the treaſures of this world are of little or no advantage to thoſe who poſſeſs them. Thus they who have abundance of ſilver and gold, and precious ſtones, can really enjoy but a ſmall part thereof: but 'tis not ſo with truth. Every

part of it is useful to us, and may afford us some pleasure and satisfaction. Religion, whether we consider it with regard to its doctrines or precepts, is every way of great advantage to us: and this will more fully appear, if we consider, that whatever we can find useful and serviceable in the things of this world to a man in human life, that we shall more abundantly find in those divine truths, which are contained in the word of God, as conducive to our spiritual and eternal life.

As in scripture the word of God is compared to the finest metals, to those which are most valued by men; so the wise man represents divine truths as *an ornament* to us, as *a crown*; and compares them to *precious stones*. And indeed every truth adorns the mind; for the more we know of God, the more are we like him, provided that our hearts and affections are correspondent to our intellectual powers: and we are speaking of truth under that notion, as it adorns a man's soul; not only that he knows more thereof than others do, but that his mind is rectified thereby, his soul delivered from the power of impetuous passions, and corrupt and vile affections. For 'tis after this manner we must acquire truth and wisdom; according to the wise man 'tis in this sense, that he recommends it as the brightest and most valuable ornament: it is *a grace to our necks*, and *a crown to our heads*. 'Tis that which

which renders a man esteemed in the sight of his fellow-creatures; and that which is well-pleasing even in the view of his Creator. God loves to see men bear his own image: error is contrary to God, as darkness is contrary to light; for he is *a God of truth, and without iniquity* [o]. And iniquity is often opposed to truth in the holy scripture. Thus the apostle Paul, describing the ungodly, says; *They obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness* [p]. It is an obedience to the truth, in opposition to an unrighteous rebellion against God, which is required of us. And if we *buy the truth* in this sense, there is nothing can so adorn us; it will represent us as glorious and lovely in the view of all discerning minds: and sometimes the wicked themselves will be obliged to confess our comeliness. If they see our charity, our patience, and humility, and meekness; this light will so *shine amongst them,* as to induce them to *glorify our heavenly Father* [q]. If the light of our minds shines in our conversations, and we live conformable to the just notions contain'd in the word of God; if *the truth makes us free,* as our Saviour says, and we are delivered from the captivity of sin, *then shall we be free indeed* [r]. At what a vast expence are some persons for their ornaments? But how is truth under-valued, because 'tis not esteemed so ornamental as

[o] Deut. 32. 4.
[p] Rom. 2. 8.
[q] Mat. 5. 16.
[r] John 8. 32, 36.

truly

truly it is? And how great and juſt a reproach is it to many, that they ſpare no coſt in decking their bodies, while they leave their ſouls unadorned? The ſoul, in the naked circumſtances it is in by nature, is the object of horror, as it is infected with ſin: and yet the ſouls of men are ſo neglected, and treated after a manner ſo careleſs, as if they were indifferent whether they had ſouls or no; or as if they were ignorant whether there was any ſuch thing to be expected as the ſalvation of the ſoul, or the condemnation of it.

Men highly value thoſe things which may be a defenſe to them; for what would it ſignify to a man to enjoy all other advantages of life, if he lies open and expoſed to every inſulting enemy? But *truth*, 'tis ſaid, *ſhall keep us* [r]; it ſhall preſerve us: it is a defenſe unto us, as well as an ornament; it will ſecure us on every ſide. The divine protection will be ours; God's angels will have charge concerning us, *to keep us in all our ways* [s], when *in all our ways we acknowledge him* [t]. As we ſhall be ſecured from temporal evils, for all *the ways of wiſdom* and truth *are ways of pleaſantneſs, and paths of peace* [u]; ſo in a ſpecial manner from thoſe ſpiritual enemies who are moſt deſtructive. How great an advantage is it for a man to have truth on his ſide? This is that which has

[r] Prov. 6. 22.
[s] Pſal. 91. 11.
[t] Prov. 3. 6.
[u] Ver. 17.

furniſhed

furniſhed many a one, who has had but a ſmall capacity of knowledge in compariſon, *to confound the wiſdom of the wiſe* [v]; enabled him *to put to ſilence the ignorance of men* [w], however ſophiſtically they have managed their arguments. How many, otherwiſe of a ſmall capacity, yet in the cauſe of truth, have been able *to render a reaſon of the hope that is in them with meekneſs and fear* [x]? and being well-furniſhed with truth in their own ſouls, they have been capable of *making their light ſhine* [y] to the conviction of others.

It is a guard againſt the ſubtle inſinuations of Satan. One who is well-inſtructed in the divine word, and *has reſpect to all God's commandments*, can anſwer Satan as our Saviour did; and confound the adverſary of his ſoul, by urging the laws of God againſt all temptations to ſin, and the doctrine of the goſpel againſt all his inſinuations and attempts to delude him, and to lead him into error. Truth is of great advantage as 'tis our defenſe; then may we *lie down in peace, and our reſt ſhall be ſweet to us* [z]. When we can *exerciſe ourſelves in this, to have always a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards men* [a]; *then ſhall we not be aſhamed, when we have reſpect to all his commands* [b]: then ſhall the poſture of our minds be fix'd,

[v] 1 Cor. 1. 27.
[w] 1 Pet. 2. 15.
[x] *Chap.* 3. 15.
[y] Mat. 5. 16.
[z] Prov. 3. 24.
[a] Acts 24. 16.
[b] Pſal. 119. 6.

that

that *we ſhall not be toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive* [c]. Then ſhall we be ready, as *not being ignorant of Satan's devices*, to give a foil to that *great adverſary of our ſouls*, when he preſumes to attack us.

Another great advantage of the truth is this, that it is the very food and nouriſhment of our ſouls. Our ſouls have need of food as well as our bodies; for there is a ſpiritual life to be maintained as well as a temporal one: *Keep her, for ſhe is thy life*, ſays the wiſe man, ſpeaking of *wiſdom and inſtruction* [d]; which is the ſame as truth. Of how great advantage then muſt it needs be for us to *buy the truth? Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price*, ſays the prophet [e]. Buy the great conveniences and advantages of life. Every one is willing to buy thoſe which concern the temporal life: and then certainly truth is to be bought at any rate whatſoever, ſeeing the life of our ſouls, which is of ſo much more importance, is concerned therein. *For the ſoul to be without knowledge is not good* [f]: that is, to be without truth. Ignorance of the great and eſſential truths of religion famiſhes the ſoul, and keeps it in a miſerable condition. To be *diſobedient to the truth*, is to be in a ſtate of alienation from God;

[c] Eph. 4. 14.
[d] Prov. 4. 13.
[e] Iſa. 55. 1.
[f] Prov. 19. 2.

and

and our ſouls muſt famiſh if they are not ſpiritually united to God, the fountain of life, who is himſelf truth and righteouſneſs. It is of the higheſt importance to us therefore, on that account, that our ſouls may feed on truth, and be nouriſhed thereby, and grow up, even to eternal life. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is to be fed on by faith; and faith is that grace whereby we apprehend and embrace the truths of the goſpel, the truths which concern our bleſſed Redeemer. It is therefore, I ſay, of the higheſt advantage, becauſe 'tis our very life, and the food of our ſouls: and therefore one would think there ſhould need no great perſuaſion to engage us to buy, if we have a value for our ſouls, and a value for that which may feed them, and nouriſh them up to eternal life. It is indeed every thing that is deſirable; and ſo 'tis repreſented to us in the holy ſcriptures. 'Tis counted the greateſt treaſure in the world, the greateſt portion, the beſt inheritance that we can poſſibly obtain. *I counſel thee*, ſays our Lord, *to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayeſt be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame of thy nakedneſs do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-ſalve, that thou mayeſt ſee* [5]. It is of the greateſt benefit to us, on many accounts. All the comforts of life, all the accommodations and conveniences which men enjoy here;

[5] Rev. 3. 18.

all

all are represented by this one great advantage. It is our food to nourish us; it is a medicine to heal us of our spiritual distempers; it is clothing to attire and adorn us; it is a treasure and inheritance to make us rich. All these resemblances are to signify, that as these things are most earnestly desired by men, and they are very diligent to acquire them; so truth is more desirable and valuable than them all; the knowledge of the true God, or the true religion, more to be esteem'd, and therefore is more especially to be pursued. It is our very great advantage, in that it not only affords us a solid peace and contentment of mind, but the greatest satisfaction, the greatest solace and comfort imaginable; it is *sweeter to our taste than honey, or the honey-comb* [b]. As when the disciples of our Lord Jesus came first to him, and were convinced; with what satisfaction did they receive the doctrine, that *this* was *the Christ*, when there were sufficient arguments set before them to prove it? So when Simeon was convinced that the Messiah was come, and his aged eyes beheld him, there was nothing in this world could be any longer valuable to him; and therefore he desires to go into another: *Now Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation* [a]. The knowledge of God by Jesus Christ gives

[b] Psal. 19. 10. | [a] Luke 2. 29.

the higheſt ſatisfaction imaginable. And I may ſay this concerning every particular truth of chriſtianity, that there is a wonderful ſatisfaction attends it. Error does ſtrangely diſturb the ſoul; vain imaginations ariſe from thence, and prejudices: and this is the property of error, that as it fills the mind with things which are contrary to truth; ſo oftentimes the notions of a man are contradictory to one another while he is in error. It is the property of truth to clear the mind, to make darkneſs fly away, to ſilence our prejudices, and fill the mind with calmneſs and ſerenity. A wiſe man, a philoſopher, is uneaſy unleſs he can find the truth, unleſs he can find ſome arguments to demonſtrate the truth of ſuch or ſuch a propoſition, that ſo he may receive it and believe it; tho it does not concern the intereſt of his ſoul as to his everlaſting ſtate. But there is ſuch a thing in man as conſcience: and it is the property of religious truth to bring a calm of conſcience with it. But if a man does not embrace the truth, there is room for his conſcience to upbraid him, that he has not made uſe of thoſe means and advantages which the providence of God had furniſh'd him with, to inform and ſettle his mind in ſuch a reſpect. When a man can't ſay, that his practice is founded upon the divine precepts, he has a conſcience to reproach him. When his practice is contrary to the word of God, when he omits

that

that which God requires him to do, or offers that to God in his worſhip and in his ſervice, which is only an human invention, ſubſtituted in the room of a divine command; this muſt cauſe an uneaſineſs in his mind, where there is a tenderneſs of conſcience: and if we have not tenderneſs of conſcience, we are certainly in a dangerous condition.

Who would not therefore *buy the truth*, when there are ſo many great advantages on its ſide even in this world? But what is time in compariſon of eternity? what is our preſent ſatisfaction in compariſon of the enjoyment of God in the world to come? What words are ſufficient to expreſs the advantage of *buying the truth* in that reſpect? What an advantage will it be to have this character upon us at the day of our Lord's appearance, that we have not *denied the faith*, that *we have had reſpect to all his righteous commands? They that break the leaſt of God's commandments, and teach men ſo, ſhall be called leaſt in the kingdom of heaven*; *but they that do and teach them, ſhall be called great in the kingdom of heaven* [k]. What a great happineſs, to have that approbation of our Lord Jeſus, *Well done, good and faithful ſervant, enter into the joy of thy Lord* [l]? What a happineſs, to ſeek after truth, and adhere to it; the conſequence of which is calmneſs of conſcience in this world,

[k] Mat. 5. 19. [l] *Chap.* 25. 23.

and, when we come to die, the comfortable reflection, that we *have walked before the Lord with a perfect heart?* And what a ſurprizing joy in the world to come, to be let into the knowledge of abundance more truths than we could underſtand here? What a great reward, to have our capacities enlarged, and the bright emanations of divine truth continually flowing in upon our minds? and to have a fulneſs of joy, as well as a perfection of knowledge; a capacity of enjoying God, as well as a capacity of knowing him? All the great things which are ſaid of heaven, ſhew us what an advantage it is to *buy the truth.* What are all the treaſures of this world in compariſon of the great bleſſings of the world to come? the great advantage of knowing God, and enjoying him for ever; of living in a ſtate where there ſhall be *no death, no pain, no ſorrow, but all tears ſhall be wiped from the eyes* [m], and clouds and darkneſs ſcatter'd from the mind? where there ſhall not be the leaſt ſtain of ſin; nor the leaſt deſire of change, becauſe the ſtate is happy and perfect, and agreeable to the moſt earneſt longings of our ſouls, which have a natural and neceſſary deſire to be happy? All this is on the ſide of truth; theſe are the advantages which they obtain who buy it. But let us conſider,

[m] Rev. 21. 4.

3. What

3. What it is that is to be paid down for it, what it is we are to part with for truth; and we ſhall ſee that 'tis infinitely below the true worth and value of it. I have ſhewn that truth is ſo valuable in itſelf, that nothing is fit to purchaſe it; that it is ſo advantageous to us, that it ought to be valued above all things whatſoever: and now I ſhall ſhew briefly, that what we are required to part with, is infinitely inferior to it. It may be well compared to that *pearl of great price, to buy which, a man ſells all that he has* [n]. It is impoſſible we can buy it too dear, becauſe it is infinitely uſeful to us. Sometimes we may be called to part with all; not only with our eſtates, our houſes and lands, but with our wives, children, and our lives themſelves: and indeed we muſt be ready to part with every thing, if we will follow Chriſt as becomes us; we muſt ſacrifice all to him. This is the moſt that we can do; and even this we ought to do chearfully: we ſhould not be much concern'd if we are obliged to part with all the advantages of life, in defenſe of the truth. This is to do as our Lord Jeſus Chriſt did: *He came into the world to bear witneſs to the truth* [o]. So did the martyrs: *They loved not their lives to the death*, on ſuch occaſions as theſe were. And indeed when theſe things are rightly conſidered, this will be no great loſs; to part with our

[n] Mat. 13. 46. | [o] John 18. 37.

lives, which we muſt otherwiſe lay down in a very little time; to part with our temporal friends and relations, when in a little time we muſt neceſſarily be removed to a ſtate where *we ſhall know no man after the fleſh* [q]; where this bond of temporal relation will be intirely diſſolved. What do theſe things therefore ſignify, which are of ſo little conſequence in themſelves? But perhaps the truth may be bought at a much cheaper rate: indeed we muſt have a diſpoſition of mind, a reſolution to lay down our lives for the truth, if God calls us to it; but every one is not called actually to ſuffer martyrdom. A multitude of chriſtians have been called to this honour, and have gone thro' it; and *great will be their reward in heaven* [r]. But how many in ſuch a nation, in ſuch an age as this, may *buy the truth* at a cheaper rate? may have in this world great advantages, beſides the *laying up a good foundation againſt the time to come?* But putting the caſe to the worſt, that we are to part with all; how ſmall a matter is this? To part with our errors, our prejudices, our vain imaginations, for the ſake of truth, I hope no body will think this a hard bargain; to part with our ſins which flow from our ignorance, and are the greateſt enemies to our welfare; to part with our vanity and folly, which are our reproach: ſure 'tis an advantage to part with theſe. So that ſome

[q] 2 Cor. 5. 16. | [r] Mat. 5. 12.

things

things which we are to part with for the ſake of truth, are not worth the keeping; but we ought to part with them by all means in the world. And every thing elſe, put things to the worſt, that we may be called to part with for the ſake of truth, are but of a temporal conſideration, or very little in compariſon of the joy and peace of a good conſcience here, and the happineſs of heaven hereafter.

Now I think the matter is already ſufficiently proved, that 'tis every one's intereſt to *buy the truth.* I have proved that 'tis infinitely valuable in itſelf; that it is ſo in the account of God, in the eſteem of angels, and of all wiſe and good men. I have ſhewn 'tis moſt advantageous to us, and we muſt periſh by our folly if we will not purchaſe it. I have ſhewn that what we are to pay down is either worth nothing, worſe than nothing; or elſe it is of ſmall conſequence in regard of the great thing we are to purchaſe. This being proved, let me make a reflection or two; leaving the prohibition, *ſell it not*, to another time. And,

1. How acceptable then ſhould ſuch an offer and propoſal be to every one of us, if the bargain be ſo good? Does not every one deſire his gain and profit? Does not every one deſire a convenient opportunity for making his advantage, and raiſing his fortune? Is not every one, who uſes com-

merce, endeavouring to hearken after the times and seasons which are proper for the buying or selling of this and that thing, that he may get gain? Are not men projecting night and day, *hardly* sometimes *giving sleep to their eyes, or slumber to their eye-lids? They rise early, and sit up late* [r], that they may lay their schemes aright, and that their projects may take; and that they may get a considerable gain. But why all this labour and solicitude, this toil and anxious care; why all these innumerable projects, when in a little time men pass out of this world, and *all their thoughts perish* [s], and all their schemes become abortive? How few are there who will make a bargain for eternity? that will *seek that durable riches and righteousness* [t] which will last for ever? that will furnish themselves with those ornaments which will never wither? with that crown which will never fade? those garments which will never wear out? with those great advantages which will adorn their souls, which will feed and nourish them, and give them satisfaction and content? If a man could compass the whole world, and gain it to himself, what would it signify amidst the torture of diseases? what would it signify when his conscience is awakened? But truth and religion will support a man under the sharpest pains of his body, and under the troubles and

[r] Psal. 127. 2.
[s] Psal. 146. 4.
[t] Prov. 8. 18.

horrors

horrors of his mind; will calm his conſcience, and give him joy and ſerenity in the hour of death. This is therefore *to lay up a good foundation againſt the time to come* [u]; *to ſeek after* the truth, *true knowledge*, the true religion, *as for hid treaſure*; and to count nothing too dear to part with on the account of truth. What pity is it that ſo few will engage in this good bargain, tho there is ſo much profit and advantage to be had? And,

2. What is ſaid of truth in general, that in ſome meaſure may be applied to every truth in particular. How many are for increaſing their eſtates, for augmenting their trades; and yet how few who profeſs chriſtianity, are for adding one grace to another, for improving in grace and knowledge continually? Do we think we have truth enough, becauſe we believe perhaps, and practiſe ſome of the greateſt and moſt eſſential truths of religion? Should we not be ſuſpicious of ourſelves? Do I not embrace ſome error in my mind? Do I not retain *a lye in my right hand?* Am I not defective in ſome religious practiſe which God requires of me? Am I not ſhort of my duty in this and that particular? Do I not embrace ſome falſe notions of which I ought to be diveſted? *Then ſhall I not be aſhamed, when I have reſpect to all God's commands* [v].

[u] 1 Tim. 6. 19. | [v] Pſal. 119. 6.

Let

Let me therefore moſt earneſtly exhort thoſe who have not bought the truth, who are not thus intereſted in the true religion, that they would not for a moment defer making ſo good a bargain; eſpecially conſidering it is uncertain how long the offer may be made. And for thoſe who have bought the truth, who are willing to lay down all at the call of Chriſt, rather than part with the truth; as they have advantages already, and greater to expect, ſo let me deſire them to examine themſelves ſeriouſly, whether every truth is not thus worth buying; to examine whether they are acquainted with the mind of God in every particular thing, which he requires them to believe and practiſe. Let every one be jealous of himſelf, and examine his own heart; and whenever the providence of God furniſhes him with means of conviction, let him *buy the truth, and ſell it not.*

SER-

SERMON XIII.

Preach'd at *PINNERS-HALL*, Feb. 10, 170$\frac{4}{5}$.

PROV. xxiii. 23.

The former part of the verſe.

Buy the truth, and ſell it not.

The ſecond SERMON on this text.

I AM now to go to the other part of the argument. As I have before perſuaded you to *buy the truth*, ſo now I am to diſſuade you from *ſelling it.* Some perſons have made a proficiency in the knowledge of religion, and then have declined it; *and it were better for them not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to have turned their backs upon it* [w]. *They did run well; who hinder'd them* [x]? as the apoſtle ſpeaks concerning ſome: and our Lord Jeſus ſays of thoſe who are compared to the ſtony ground, that *they received the word with joy: they ſprang up*, and gave a

[w] 2 Pet. 2. 21. [x] Gal. 5. 7.

hopeful

hopeful prospect of fruitfulness; but on a sudden they were wither'd: *when the sun arose, when persecution befel them for the sake of the truth, they were offended* [y]; found some occasion or another to complain of the truth, and rather than suffer, were willing to part with it; to *sell it* at any rate, rather than keep it when it was attended with such difficulty. Of these the apostle speaks, that they *make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience* [z]. They were engaged in a very good trade and employment, if I may so term it; they were like *merchants seeking goodly pearls* [a]; but by their folly they run themselves upon a rock, and squander away the best and greatest treasure. Because they love the things of this world, and pursue them, they abandon the trade of heaven; they forsake the pursuit of that treasure which cannot fail, cannot corrupt, cannot be stolen; and seek trifles which are not worth the acquisition of those who are capable of nobler employments. 'Tis true, where truth, that is, the true religion, takes intire possession of a man's very soul, not only of his head but of his heart, not only informs his judgment, but changes his heart; then it will never be intirely lost. 'Tis like so much leaven that makes a change upon the whole soul, and transmutes it into its own likeness. When *pure religion and undefiled* [b] thus enters into a man's soul, it

[y] Luke 8. 13.
[z] 1 Tim. 1. 19.
[a] Mat. 13. 45.
[b] James 1. 27.

works very powerful effects; as the wise man says, *When wisdom entreth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee* [c]. When a man has not only a superficial view of truth, or a transient desire after it; is not only taken with the beauty of it for a few moments, but upon the most deliberate thoughts finds it infinitely amiable, and therefore embraces it, and devotes all the powers of his soul to the interest of religion; when *the truth has made him free*, and engaged him in the ways of holiness and virtue in opposition to vice and wickedness; then there is so sure and solid a foundation laid, that that man will never *sell the truth*. When any proposal of this kind is made to him, or when any temptation comes in the way, and calls him aside from the knowledge and practise of the truth, he'll be ready to answer with the disciples, *Lord, whither shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life* [d]? The pleasures of sin and the advantages of the world will appear so mean and little in the view of a man who is so deeply convinced, and has had such a taste and relish of divine things, that *having drank the old wine, he will not straitway desire new, because he says the old is better* [e].

[c] Prov. 2. 10, 11.
[d] John 6. 68.
[e] Luke 5. 39.

But

But yet, tho this be true of religion in general, even good men may expoſe themſelves to danger by parting with certain truths for a time; and it may be they may part with this or that particular truth thro' the courſe of their lives: but then this will be ſuch a damage to them, that tho their ſouls are *ſaved, yet it will be ſo as by fire* [f]; and tho they arrive at the kingdom of God, they will be called the *leaſt in that kingdom* [g], for not having acted ſo conſciencioufly, and with ſuch integrity as they ought. And therefore this exhortation will be of uſe to us all: whether we have embraced the truth with that fervency of ſpirit which has been deſcrib'd, or not, we are ſtill to be warned againſt abandoning it; and thoſe who are moſt ſecure, and moſt confirmed in holineſs and knowledge, yet may fall into divers errors and ſnares, unleſs they keep well upon their guard. Beſides, notwithſtanding the efficacy of the divine grace, and the meaſures God has taken to ſecure the ſtanding of his people, that they may not be utterly diſcouraged amidſt the infirmities they feel; the way and courſe he takes to confirm and eſtabliſh us, is by uſing certain means which he propoſes to us, and which are to work upon us after ſuch a manner as may encourage all the induſtry and care imaginable. So that this exhortation is of force unto us

[f] 1 Cor. 3. 15. | [g] Mat. 5. 19.

all:

all: for if we can be careleſs about a matter of this conſequence, about the truth, about the true religion, or indeed any part of it, we have reaſon to ſuſpect whether we ever bought the truth, whether we were ever ſenſible of its excellency, whether we were willing to part with all for the ſake of it; for if we have, then 'tis to be hop'd we ſhall never be ſo fooliſh as to *ſell it.* And beſides, as I have intimated, it will be a dangerous thing, and may be a great damage to us to part with any one true doctrine, with any one true precept and inſtitution: and therefore we are to obſerve, that the exhortation extends itſelf to all truths, whether relating to doctrines or morals; it holds good, that we are to *buy the truth, but not to ſell it.*

Having ſpoken theſe things by way of preliminary, I ſhall now diſſuade you from *ſelling the truth* by theſe ſeveral arguments. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

I. That there is nothing ſo valuable as truth itſelf is; and therefore 'tis impoſſible that any equivalent can be propoſed to you.

II. That upon the ſuppoſition, any thing equivalent can be propoſed, which ſhould be as valuable in itſelf; 'tis certain, that all the things which can be propoſed in exchange for truth, are nothing comparable to it, in regard of its uſefulneſs and advantage to you.

III. That

III. That not only is there nothing can be propoſed which is a fit price for truth; but if you ſhould ſell it, whatſoever you may pretend to gain, the ſale of it will be attended with infinite damage and miſery. Not only are the things little, comparatively, which can be given you for truth, but thoſe little things will be attended with great conſequences of miſery; ſo that you had better have been intirely without them.

Now every one will grant this muſt be an ill bargain if the caſe be ſo circumſtanced. No man in his wits will ſell a treaſure, who can't have at leaſt ſomething that is equivalent to the thing he ſells. No prudent man will purchaſe a thing which is neither valuable in itſelf, nor uſeful to him, eſpecially if it be attended with evil conſequences; if great damages will enſue to him hereby. Sometimes a man may part with one thing that he may enjoy another, becauſe the other may be more worth; but it is certainly a folly to part with what he has, if he can't have what is of equal value in exchange for it. Sometimes a man may be glad to part with a treaſure that he has, for ſomething which is of equal worth in itſelf, and more uſeful to him. And ſometimes tho the value be not ſo great, or the uſefulneſs ſo much as a man expected; yet if there be no dangerous effects annexed to it, if his bargain

bargain be not very prudent, yet it may appear not to be very bad, becauſe there is no fatal conſequence attending it; but when a man ſhall part with that which ſhall involve him, by parting with it, in great difficulties and miſeries, when he ſhall receive abundance of damage by ſelling, and at the ſame time but a very ſmall benefit in compariſon of the advantages he has parted with; this doubles the miſery, and conſequently ſhews the folly of the bargain to be ſo much the greater. This will appear plainly to you if you reflect upon what has been ſaid already concerning the excellency and the value of truth, and its uſefulneſs to us. But let me ſpeak to theſe things a little more particularly.

I. There is nothing ſo valuable as truth itſelf is; and therefore it is impoſſible that any equivalent can be propoſed to us. What can be offer'd us in exchange for truth? Either it muſt be that with which our minds may be furniſh'd inſtead of truth, that which may take the place of it there; or elſe it muſt be ſome other advantage another way. As for what we can exchange truth for, which may take the room thereof in our minds; it is ſo far from being of equal value, that we had a thouſand times better be without it: for not only will ignorance enſue upon the parting with truth, but errors and prejudices take its place; and theſe are worſe than ig-

norance, and therefore are so far from being of any value, that they are very criminal, and consequently must be very disadvantageous; that ignorance, which is accompanied with error about the way of salvation, is very dangerous: so that no man in his senses, no rational creature can think that error, and folly, and prejudice, can take the place of truth deservedly; and that it is worth a man's while to part with the one, that his mind may be filled with the other. *For the soul to be without knowledge, is not good* [h], the wise man says: but for it to be stuff'd with prejudices and erroneous conceptions, this is much worse, because this makes way for abundance of crimes. Now no man in his senses can be supposed to be desirous to part with truth, merely for the sake of errors and prejudices.

On the other hand, therefore, the course of men is, when they part with truth, to propose to themselves some advantage another way; not an advantage to their minds, but an advantage to their bodies; not to adorn their minds, but that they may be capable of setting themselves off the better in this world. Sensual pleasures, honours, friends, riches, these are the things for which men barter away the truth; these are the gay things which affect their senses, and make them desirous of such an exchange as is the highest folly in the sight of God, and

[h] Prov. 19. 2.

in the account of all wise men. If we believe our Saviour, he tells us so: *For what*, says he, *shall it profit a man, tho he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul*[i]? What profit is there in any thing that can be proposed to us in comparison of truth? That which I am shewing you at present, is only in the general, that nothing can be proposed to us which can be equivalent in its value to truth. Either it must be error and prejudice instead of it, which one would think men should not embrace for its own sake; or else it must be temporal advantages, and these are very small, in their own nature far below what truth is. I might shew you this many ways.

Truth is the ornament of the mind, it is of a spiritual nature; it is that which renders men so much the more like to God, than otherwise they could be. Man is made after the image of God in regard of the reason with which he was endow'd, his natural image; and then his religious image, in that he was made holy. Now the truth which we are speaking of is light and knowledge, excellent in itself in regard of its own nature; and then as it is religious truth, it is of the highest consequence, and renders us so much the more like God, as he is infinitely holy. For a man to be furnish'd with knowledge and holiness, this is to make him

[i] Mat. 16. 26.

look like a copy taken from the divine original, ſo far as a creature of his rank may be made to reſemble God; this makes him bear the image of his maker. Now what is it for a man to be poſſeſſed of a large eſtate, of much land and many houſes, to have great heaps of treaſure, and abundance of jewels, and gay clothes; to have a numerous retinue, ſplendid equipage, and his table furniſhed with the moſt delicious banquets? What are theſe but ſenſible things, which the moſt fooliſh and the moſt wicked, the moſt deſpicable, the moſt loathſom and vile amongſt mankind may enjoy as well as he? Theſe are not the things which can diſtinguiſh one rational creature from another, ſo as to make him more excellent. So that in their own nature, as they are ſenſible things, and belong unto our outward ſtate here, they are not comparable to this which is the furniture of the ſoul; theſe ornaments of truth and knowledge, righteouſneſs and holineſs; theſe jewels, this treaſure which is durable and will laſt for ever. It is eaſy for any one who will conſider the matter a little, to ſee that all divine truths are far above all ſenſible enjoyments whatſoever: therefore we cannot make an exchange; we cannot drive a bargain but it will be a fooliſh one, if we *ſell the truth*. But then,

II. As truth appears in its own nature to be more excellent than any thing which can be

be propoſed to us in exchange for it; ſo if we conſider its great uſefulneſs to us, as well as its native excellency, the advantage is ſtill on the ſide of truth. It is the uſefulneſs of a thing, that determines us, ſometimes in ſome exigencies of life, to part with a thing of more intrinſic worth, for that which in its own nature is leſs valuable. Thus a prince, by reaſon of his exceſſive thirſt in the great heat of ſummer, was willing to part with his crown for a cup of cold water. Thus *Eſau ſold his birthright for a meſs of pottage*[k]. He acted indeed very fooliſhly; but this ſhews how importunately men deſire things to anſwer their preſſing neceſſities, and which they think may be of immediate uſe and advantage to them. Therefore tho there is nothing equivalent to truth in its own nature, yet perhaps ſome might imagine that there are other things more uſeful, or that may be ſo upon ſome occaſions; and on this account the exchange might be thought prudent: but here 'tis ſo far from that, that there is nothing can be uſeful and advantageous to us in compariſon of truth. Indeed it muſt be own'd the knowledge of truth will not make a man rich in this world, will not ſurround him with honours, and furniſh him with a pompous equipage, or ſpread his table with the delicacies of a ſenſual banquet. We read in the ſcripture of poor wiſe men, and ſome of them who

[k] Gen. 25. 33. Heb. 12. 16.

did a great deal of good; as, *the wise man that saved the city, and yet was neglected; none remembred that poor wise man*[1]. 'Tis no uncommon thing to see persons of excellent endowments contemned, and make but a poor figure in this world. But then we must consider that man has a twofold capacity, as has been intimated before: we have souls as well as bodies; and that which is useful to our souls, is infinitely to be preferred before that which is useful only to our bodies. We are to live in eternity as well as to live in time; and that which is useful to prepare us for another world, is therefore mightily to be preferred before that which can only accommodate us here. He who employs all his time and care to live easily and quietly here, and makes no provision and preparation for a better life, is guilty of egregious folly. This is preferring temporal things to spiritual, preferring trifles to the most substantial and valuable treasures; preferring time to eternity, a few moments to that state which will never end. 'Tis as if a man should chuse counters rather than great quantities of the most precious metals, pebbles rather than pearls and diamonds.

Thus if we consider how useful truth is to a man, we shall find that the wise man's counsel is good, that we should *buy the truth, and not sell it*; for truth is better, and

[1] Eccles. 9. 15.

of

of greater advantage to us than any thing we can get in exchange for it. Truth will furniſh and ennoble our minds better than all the titles which can be given us here: it will rectify and govern our hearts better than all the maxims of human policy and prudence: it will make us more truly excellent than all human accompliſhments whatſoever; for it will change our hearts, and render us conformable to the image of God: it will enrich us more than all the treaſures of both the Indies; for were a man able to amaſs them together, they could not make him rich to eternity. There is a *treaſure* which is *laid up in heaven*, and yet enjoyed by a religious man, in ſome good degree, while here upon earth. Theſe are ornaments which *the moth cannot eat*; theſe are *treaſures which the ruſt cannot conſume; which thieves cannot break thro', and ſteal* [m]. That man may be counted politick, who *makes himſelf temporal friends with the mammon of unrighteouſneſs* [n]; who *gets the friendſhip of this world, which is enmity againſt God:* but he is infinitely more wiſe, who ſo makes himſelf friends with the things of this world, if he has them, as that he may have the friendſhip of God; and if he has not the things of this world, yet if he has truth, he has ſuch a treaſure in his ſoul that he has the friendſhip of God notwithſtanding, and will have it for ever. Truth makes

[m] Mat. 6. 19. | [n] Luke 16. 9.

him know how *to use the world, so as not to abuse it* [o], if God gives it him. Divine knowledge, and the wisdom which is from above, shews him how he shall enjoy the things of this world after a manner becoming one who professes the name of Christ; how he shall transmute, as it were, temporal riches into eternal treasure by his charity: and if he has not the things of this world, yet he shall be enriched and adorned with truth; truth shall be his shield and buckler, and such a defense as shall enable him to honour God peculiarly in the time of his suffering and affliction. What is there therefore in this world that can be compared to truth as to its usefulness? it will make us happy here, and happy for ever. If a man could enjoy all the riches of the world, they can't give him ease in bodily pains; much less can they allay the agonies of his conscience when *the terrors of the Lord are set before him.* But the true religion, which will support a man under all afflictions of life, and agonies of death; that will fill the soul with *joy unspeakable, and full of glory* [p], when all things round are full of terror and astonishment: that is capable of making a man glory in infirmities, I mean, in his sufferings and afflictions, as the apostle did; *and count it all joy, when he falls under those temptations* [q], *because of the excellency of the*

[o] 1 Cor. 7. 31.
[p] 1 Pet. 1, 8.
[q] James 1. 2.

know-

knowledge of God, which furniſhes him with that which can anſwer Satan, and make him *more than a conqueror* over all the powers of darkneſs. And if the advantages of religion are great in this world, what will the advantages be in the world to come? what a return does the ſoul, as it were, make in this reſpect? He who trades for truth, not only enjoys much of it here, but has a wonderful return ſecured for him in heaven. What *a good foundation* does he *lay up againſt the time to come* [r]? And who can deſcribe the advantages of that world of which we here know ſo very little? and yet that little which we know can *fill us with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory* [f]. What an advantage, to be rendred capable of enjoying God, and of enjoying him for ever? of having the capacities and powers of our ſouls prepared and diſpoſed by truth for the enjoyment of God, and having thoſe inlarged capacities filled with that fulneſs? of having thoſe treaſures which will make us rich for ever? an inheritance in the New Jeruſalem, whoſe ſtreets are paved with pure gold, whoſe gates are pearls, and whoſe walls are of precious ſtones [s]? of having an intereſt in that bleſſed ſtate, in that bleſſed ſociety, from whence all ſorrow and pain is baniſh'd; and where joy and ſerenity, peace and pleaſure reign for evermore without

[r] 1 Tim. 6. 9.
[f] 1 Pet. 1. 8.
[s] Rev. 21. 18——21.

any

any interruption, and without any ceſſation?

III. That truth is not to be ſold upon any terms, appears farther; in that if we ſhould ſell it for any of the things of this world, as we ſhould make a bad bargain to part with heaven, with the privileges of grace and glory, for the trifles of this periſhing world, ſo the bargain would ſtill appear more fooliſh, in that parting with truth we ſhould part with our own ſouls; that is, our ſouls muſt be made miſerable for ever.

If we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us [t]; *the love of truth is not in us.* Now if we will part with truth, we not only part with that which would make us happy, but in gaining the world we gain only a little ſenſible pleaſure, a few friends who perhaps will fail us in a time of adverſity; or a little money which will perhaps fly from us before we go out of the world, but however we muſt part with it then; a few ſenſible delights and gratifications which will leave us when we are old, and perhaps may forſake us long before, as it often happens when ſome chronic diſtemper faſtens itſelf in our bones and ſinews. So that this muſt needs be a very ill bargain, to part with truth for the trifling things of this world, eſpecially when we ſhall ſuſtain ſo much damage by the exchange. It was

[t] 1 John 2. 15.

great

great folly for Eſau to part with his birthright for a little pottage to ſatisfy the immediate craving of his bodily appetite. What was the conſequence of it? Why, he parted with ſpiritual privileges and advantages: he parted with the bleſſing. This was a great folly indeed, and brought great miſeries upon him.

And here I ſhould more particularly repreſent to you, what great damages enſue to thoſe who part with the truth in this life: and then, that the conſequence, in the world to come, is the greateſt miſery of all.

1. By parting with the truth, great damages enſue in this life: a man parts with his ornament, and ſo expoſes himſelf to reproach. He is not only ſlighted by good men, but many times thoſe who have no great love to truth themſelves, yet reproach ſuch as apoſtatize, when the manner of their conduct makes it appear they did it for the love of this world? When a man parts with truth, he parts with his armour, and ſo is expoſed to many afflictions and miſeries: he is liable to the temptations of Satan; and in parting with this or that, or the other particular truth, a breach is made, and a tendency to part with the whole, intirely to *make ſhipwreck of faith, and a good conſcience* [u]. And this is the way to be given up to hardneſs of heart, and blindneſs of mind: *becauſe men receive not the truth in the love*

[u] 1 Tim. i. 19.

of

of it, but are willing to part with it, *God gives them up to ſtrong deluſions that they may believe a lye* [v]; and this is a moſt dreadful condition. And as he parts with his ornament and armour, ſo with his joy. For what joy can a rational ſoul take, unleſs it be in things of a ſuitable nature, in the knowledge of truth, in the enjoyment of God, in religion? This is a pleaſure becoming a rational ſoul: and tho a man may get ſome ſenſible pleaſure by the things of this life, yet this is not comparable to the other. A man in parting with truth parts with his beſt friend, the God of truth: they who do ſo, forſake their own mercies. For a man to *ſell the truth*, is indeed *to ſell himſelf to do wickedneſs* [w]: for if the mind be not influenced by the knowledge of truth, how ſhall the heart, how ſhall the life be governed? It is therefore for a man to lay himſelf open to the commiſſion of vice and folly: and what will be *the end of theſe things but death?*

For a man to abandon but one truth is very dangerous, and is a high provocation to God. And if you ſay, 'tis *but a little* truth [x], and not eſſential to ſalvation, but a man may be ſaved without it; I anſwer, 'tis not for us to determine without what part of truth perſons may be ſaved. No doubt but there are thoſe who are ig-

[v] 2 Theſſ. 2. 10, 11.
[w] 2 Kings 17. 17.
[x] Gen. 19. 20.

norant

norant of ſome particular truths, and yet are ſaved: but can any one ſay, that if he acts directly againſt his light and conſcience, againſt ſuch or ſuch a duty, that living and dying ſo, he may be ſaved? If he loves God, why does he not hate and abandon every ſin, and value every truth, and every duty? Can he be ſaid to love God who loves his error, who loves his luſt, who loves his folly, and loves this world more than truth? Can he be ſaid to love God who *ſells the truth?* How baſe is ſuch a proceeding as this? and how uncapable ſhall he be to ſatisfy his conſcience, upon good grounds, that all is well with him? No; let us not imagine, that if we act contrary to the ſentiments of our conſciences, and the clear light of God's word in any one particular thing, we can approve our hearts to God that we are his people. I don't ſay but ſuch may be tempted ſometimes thus to do; but can they be eaſy till they are recovered out of this temptation? Can they upon good and ſolid grounds make it appear that they are the children of God, if they have not *reſpect to all his commands* [y]? Can they make it out that they love God, unleſs they love to do his will, tho in oppoſition to all the proffers and advantageous invitations of this world? They muſt poſtpone all things, and *count all but dung and droſs* [z], in compariſon of the truth. For a man to *ſell the truth*, and thereby to part

[y] Pſal. 119. 6. [z] Phil. 3. 8.

with

with the privilege of communion with God, the great advantage of being let into the myſteries of religion more and more; (for they who know God, are like to know him more; *then ſhall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord* [a]) this is a great damage indeed. But then,

2. How great is the damage in the world to come? Many perſons have loſt much of the benefit of communion with God here, becauſe they have not ſo ſtrictly walked up to the knowledge they have received; becauſe they have not anſwered a good conſcience, as they ought to have done, in ſome particular duty or truth. But the damage here, tho great in itſelf, yet is little in compariſon of that which will follow in another world. For a man to *ſell the truth*, to part with the true religion, to abandon himſelf to error and vice, is a moſt dangerous thing; and conſequently to part with any particular truth, which is the way to part with the reſt: thus to ſell the truth, I ſay, is moſt hazardous, becauſe this is a courſe which will involve a man at laſt in endleſs miſery. What will our Lord Jeſus ſay to ſuch perſons at the great day of judgment? "You "were aſhamed of me and my words before "men; and now will I be aſhamed of you "before my Father, and before his holy "angels [b]: depart from me ye curſed, ye

[a] Hoſ. 6. 3.

[b] Mark 8. 38.

"workers

" workers of iniquity, into everlasting fire [c]." There are some certain truths which are contemptible in the world; and if a man should embrace them, he would be despised and pointed at: but shall we, for fear of the contempt of our fellow-creatures, venture our Lord's being ashamed of us at the day of judgment? Is it not better for us to endure reproach from foolish men, than for our Lord Jesus to be ashamed of us, and to deny us at the great day of his appearing? What a damage will this be to us? here will be a loss indeed? To *sell the truth* for this world, and when we come upon the brink of the other, then to want that great treasure, then to want that great jewel and crown, that excellent ornament and robe, and so *to be turned into hell with the nations that forget God* [d]; how great a misery will this be? Don't you think that the loss of the presence of God for ever will be a great punishment in itself? Don't you think that sinking into a state of misery, and there to be confin'd for ever, and to have no hope of getting out of that condition, will be an insupportable torment? To have utter despair in the midst of that torment, what can be imagined more terrible than this? Where there is no glimmering of light, no dawn of hope, no intermission of sorrow and misery? There must all those be who have *made ship-*

[c] Mat. 25. 41. [d] Psal. 9. 17.

wreck

wreck of faith, and of a good conſcience [e]; who have denied the name and truth of God, who have abandoned themſelves to error and vice: there muſt their portion be. As they loved not truth, ſo they ſhall never enjoy it: they loved not to receive the law from the mouth of the Lord, they loved not to be under the conduct and diſcipline of his truth; therefore they ſhall never enjoy his preſence, *in whoſe favour is life* [f]. Becauſe they loved darkneſs, vanity, folly, error and vice, therefore darkneſs, *the blackneſs of darkneſs ſhall be their portion for ever* [g]. Becauſe they were *lovers of pleaſures, more than lovers of God* [h], they ſhall have torments and perpetual anguiſh thro'out endleſs ages. Oh how many will there be, who will reflect upon their folly at that time, and ſay they made a fooliſh bargain indeed, to *ſell the truth*, and thereby purchaſe to themſelves everlaſting miſery? To ſell that which was ſo excellent and valuable for a few trifling pleaſures which ſo ſoon vaniſh'd away, and to inherit inſtead thereof ſubſtantial torment and miſery for ever?

I cannot imagine that any one of you remains, after this, unconcerned, that 'tis the moſt fooliſh bargain in the world *to ſell the truth*; as I hope you were convinced before, from the other parts of the words, that 'tis the happieſt bargain to buy it. Let me

[e] 1 Tim. 1. 19.
[f] Pſal. 30. 5.
[g] Jude 13.
[h] 2 Tim. 3. 4.

conclude

conclude therefore with a few brief reflections.

1. Hence it appears, that there is a great deal of folly and madneſs under the ſun. The wiſe man made many ſerious and ſorrowful reflections upon the folly of the world; and every man who has but a ſmall degree of wiſdom, may make ſome reflections of this kind, if he does but obſerve the conduct of men. Where is there almoſt a man to be found, who is earneſtly deſirous to know that truth which is of the higheſt conſequence? How are libraries ſearch'd, antient authors ranſack'd, money expended, inſtruments made, maſters ſought from one quarter of the world to another, for the improvement of arts and ſciences; ſuch as the mathematicks, for inſtance, and natural philoſophy? And what are theſe in compariſon of the truth of which we are ſpeaking, that will make a man *wiſe to ſalvation* [i]? And yet who will inquire after this? who will croſs the ſeas to ſearch after the true religion? who will ſpend any conſiderable part of his temporal ſubſtance in this purſuit? who will uſe any care and induſtry to find out the beſt inſtructor? who will employ any great part of his time in an inquiry after truth, and make religion his ſtudy and buſineſs? who will uſe all probable means

[i] 2 Tim. 3. 15.

to arrive to a good degree of knowledge in thoſe truths which are of the higheſt conſequence and importance? We ſee by this how the reliſh of mens minds is ſpoiled. Curioſity leads them a great way after the knowledge of other things: but the knowledge of God they don't reliſh; the knowledge of thoſe divine truths which are the moſt valuable, the moſt advantageous and uſeful, and which will make them moſt certainly happy. This gives us a lamentable proſpect of the generality of the world.

2. There are others who have been taken with the truth, with the beauty and excellency thereof, and have made ſome advances in their knowledge of it, and regards to it: and theſe are to be blamed that they purſue it with no more vigour; that they ſpend no more time and thought, and meditation, and prayer, *to ask of God wiſdom, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not* [l]; that they conſult not perſons who may be capable of explaining the ſcripture, as well as *ſearch the ſcripture* themſelves, *whether the things are ſo or not* [m]. How great pity, that ſo many are *ſettled upon their lees* [n]; that they have no jealouſy of themſelves, leſt ſome evil prejudices ſhould biaſs them; that they are not willing to come up to the higheſt pitch of truth? Is it not the moſt precious jewel,

[l] James 1. 5.
[m] Acts 17. 11.
[n] Jer. 48. 11.

and

and to be ſought with the greateſt diligence? Were men but *ſearching for it as for hid treaſure* [o], it were to be hoped there would be great diſcoveries made in religion, as well as in other things. Our age will be remarkable to poſterity for very conſiderable improvements in ſeveral uſeful parts of human literature: and why ſhould we not hope to have much greater advances in truth of a religious kind, if we could but ſee men have a mind to ſeek the truth for its own luſtre and excellency, as well as its uſefulneſs to them? *O that there were ſuch an heart in them* [p]!

3. This ſhews us what cauſe ſuch perſons have to rejoice, who have made the bargain mention'd in our text; who have *bought the truth*, and are reſolved *not to ſell it*. Whatſoever you have parted with, to *buy the truth*, you have cauſe to rejoice, as that *merchant who ſought goodly pearls; and having found one of great price, went and ſold all that he had, and bought it* [q]. It behoves you to rejoice, becauſe you have found the treaſure. If you have found the true religion, the fundamental principles of chriſtianity, and theſe have been practically improved upon your ſouls, ſo that you are changed and renewed in your minds; happy are you indeed. Be perſuaded continually to keep upon your minds the remembrance how great a

[o] Prov. 2. 4.
[p] Deut. 5. 29.
[q] Mat. 13. 45.

treaſure truth is, that you may never enter into a treaty with any body whatſoever about parting with it; but that you may, with abhorrence, reject all propoſals of ſuch a nature, as knowing there is nothing in the whole world comparable to truth.

To conclude: Let me exhort you all, who have received great advantages by the knowledge of the truth, to purſue the ſame advantages yet farther, and never think you know enough: never be too proud to learn, never be uneaſy if any body attempt to inform you that you are in an error; but hear all things diligently, *prove all things, hold faſt that which is good* [r]: let it be your earneſt deſire to underſtand *the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God* [s]. And as for thoſe who have not conſidered the excellency of religious truths, who can't ſay, upon good grounds, that their minds are ſo well furniſh'd therewith, as that they have made the happy bargain for eternity, that they have parted with their own errors and prejudices, and have entred into a ſolemn covenant with God, to be for him and for his truth whatſoever it coſt them; if there be ſuch here who can't ſay they have done this, that they have thus embraced the true religion with fervency of mind; why, now is the time if ever, to conſider of it. It is perhaps late; for you ſhould

[r] 1 Theſſ. 5. 21. | [s] Rom. 12. 2.

have

have thought of these things before: you have wasted a great deal of precious time perhaps, and trifled away those moments which should have been employ'd for your everlasting advantage. Let me beseech you therefore now seriously and impartially to reflect on your past conduct. What have you been seeking? where have you placed your happiness? and where have you sought your profit? *What advantage would it be to you to gain the whole world, and lose your own souls* [s]? If you *sell the truth*, what can you get that will be worth the having? *Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting, get understanding* [t]. Let me intreat you to consider the value, and usefulness, and duration of it. Consider the folly of others, that you may avoid it; consider the wisdom of those who have embraced the truth; consider the examples which have been set before you in the divine word. Consider how Abraham forsook his father's house to follow God; and that the patriarchs thought themselves happy in finding God and truth, tho they were but *pilgrims and strangers upon earth* [u]. Moses despised the pleasures of Egypt; *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, esteeming the reproach of Christ*, and of his truth, *greater riches than the treasures of Egypt* [v]. All the patriarchs and the prophets were

[s] Mat. 16. 26.
[t] Prov. 4. 7.
[u] Heb. 11. 13.
[v] Ver. 23——26.

willing to ſuffer for the ſake of truth, rather than to deny it upon any occaſion. And our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf is above all the moſt eminent example. *For this end*, ſays he, *came I into the world, that I ſhould bear witneſs to the truth* [w] : and he perſiſted in his teſtimony, altho he was ſentenced to die for it. It behoves us therefore to imitate this great pattern : for, *for this end were we born, and for this end we came into the world, that we ſhould bear witneſs to the truth.* The apoſtles laid down their lives for the truth : and how did they labour to poſſeſs the minds of others with that truth they had valued themſelves? How did they ſuffer, to confirm that true doctrine they preach'd? And how do they now enjoy the glorious advantages in heaven, of having *confeſſed the name of Chriſt before men*, and of *not being aſhamed of his words?* Let us go and do likewiſe ; imitate their example, *buy the truth* at any rate, *and not ſell it* upon any conſideration whatſoever.

[w] John 18. 37.

SERMON XIV.

Of loving the LORD our GOD.

MARK xii. 30.

And thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength: this is the firſt commandment.

OUR bleſſed Saviour, as we ſee in the former part of this chapter, had been anſwering perſons of divers ſects among the Jews, who had moved difficulties to him, with a deſign to inſnare him. Particularly in the 18th verſe, and ſo on, we have an account of a queſtion aſked him by the Sadducees, who denied the reſurrection of the dead; founded on a caſe of ſeven brethren, who, according to the law of Moſes, had taken the ſame woman to wife, and died ſucceſſively: from which they inferred, that this woman ſurviving them all, could not be capable of having every one of them at the reſurrection; and conſequently, that there

could be no ſuch thing as the reſurrection of the dead. *In the reſurrection therefore, when they ſhall riſe, whoſe wife ſhall ſhe be of them? for the ſeven had her to wife.* Our Lord eaſily removes this difficulty, by telling them it was founded upon a wrong ſuppoſition. They ſuppoſed that in the reſurrection-ſtate there would be *marrying, and giving in marriage*; and the ſame relations as in this life. *Do ye not therefore err, becauſe ye know not the ſcriptures, neither the power of God? For when they ſhall riſe from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God in heaven.* And then our Lord goes on to prove the reſurrection of the dead from that character God gave of himſelf when he appear'd to Moſes in the buſh: *I am the God of Abraham, of Iſaac, and of Jacob* [x]. From which he thus reaſons: *He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; ye therefore do greatly err.* When he had anſwered the Sadducees, *then came to him one of the Scribes*; that is, one of the doctors of the law, one of their principal miniſters: *who having heard them reaſoning together, and perceiving that he had anſwered them well, ask'd him, Which is the firſt commandment of all?* This ſeems to have been a queſtion frequently agitated among the Scribes, who were learned in the law. Our bleſſed Saviour anſwers: *The firſt of all the commandments is, Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord*

[x] Exod. 3. 6.

our

our God is one Lord. This is only the preface to that first and great commandment which is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. But in the words of our text there is the command itself: *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment* [y].

This preface, *the Lord our God is one Lord*, declares the unity of the Godhead; and therefore the perfection of the divine nature, which is the ground of this first, or great commandment: for it is the perfection of the divine nature which renders God infinitely amiable, and therefore makes it necessary that he should be loved with all the powers of intelligent creatures. This carries with it a great deal of evidence. And the scribe himself could not deny it: for he says, in the 32d verse, *Well, master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God, and there is none other but he.* Ver. 33. *And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.*

This, I say, seems to be so evident, that one would think there were no need of proving a matter so plain, and incontestable. And yet how plain soever this duty is, of lo-

[y] Deut. 6. 4.

ving

ving God, and loving him after such a manner as is contained in this commandment; men are so defective in this duty (as indeed they are in all duties; and in whatsoever duty they are deficient, 'tis because they are deficient in this, of love to God) that it is necessary to insist particularly upon it. For if the minds of men are rightly disposed by this principle of love to God, all the duties they perform will be discharged after the best manner: and, on the contrary, if they are defective in this, how splendid soever their performances may appear, and how strictly soever they may seem to comply with the divine commands, it may be said, *their hearts are not right before God* [z].

In explaining this then, which our Saviour declares to be *the first and greatest commandment of all*, it will be proper for us to consider these three things.

I. The nature of this love which we owe to God; what it is *to love the Lord our God.*

II. The extent and manner of this love; *to love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength.*

III. The dignity and importance of this commandment, as 'tis called *the first and greatest. This is the first commandment.*

[z] Acts 8. 21.

'Tis

'Tis plain that our bleſſed Lord refers to the 6th of Deuteronomy, where you have the ſame words in effect; *ver.* 4, 5. *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy might.* And to the ſame purpoſe again, in *chap.* 13. *ver.* 3. *For the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your ſoul.* And again, *chap.* 30. *ver.* 6. *And the Lord thy God will circumciſe thine heart, and the heart of thy ſeed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy ſoul; that thou may'ſt live.* And you will find, in divers paſſages of this book, that this love is farther explained by the ways of expreſſing it: *to love God, and to fear him, and ſerve him* [a]; *to love him, and keep his charge* [b]; *to love him, and walk in his ways* [c]; *to love him, and obey his voice* [d]: theſe, and ſuch like terms, are made uſe of by Moſes to ſignify how our love to God ought to be expreſſed.

But now I come particularly to conſider the firſt thing propoſed; namely,

I. The nature of this love which we owe to God; *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God.*

[a] Deut. 10. 12.
[b] *Chap.* 11. 1.
[c] Ver. 22.
[d] *Chap.* 13. 4.

As

As to the object of our love, it is the true God: and here he is spoken of as having a relation to us, called *the Lord* our *God*. This has a particular respect indeed to the people of Israel, whom God singled out from other nations, to bestow upon them special privileges; and with whom he entred into covenant, to be their God and king, to protect them from their enemies, to give them the confluence of many temporal blessings, to continue his worship amongst them, and thereby to bestow upon them spiritual blessings. And wherever there is a nation whom God favours after this manner, who have the opportunity of knowing his will, who have the means of grace, and the advantages of the true religion; it may be said, that God is *the God* of that people, by the favours of his providence.

But there is a nearer relation to God spoken of in the New Testament: a relation contracted by means of Christ Jesus, the only mediator and reconciler between God and men; thro' whom they become *the children of God*, by adoption, by regeneration, and by their conformity to God in righteousness and true holiness. 'Tis true, that these are under the strongest tyes and obligations imaginable to love God, *who has first loved them*, and bestowed such great privileges and favours upon them. *Behold, what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God* [c]! When we

[c] 1 John 3. 1.

consider

consider that this relation is founded in the blood of the Mediator, that to make reconciliation he was pleased to *lay down his own life*; well may it be said, God has shewed his love to be greater than the love of men. Friendship among men never can advance so far, as that a person so superior to mankind as our Lord Jesus was, should lay down his life for those who are infinitely inferior to him. How gloriously does the love of God manifest itself, that when *we were sinners Christ died for us*; *and when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son*[f]? So that the nearer the relation is between God and us, and the greater obligations are laid upon us, by the manner of contracting such a relation, the stronger is the obligation upon us to love God.

But indeed, if we were to consider this as a principle of natural religion only; our obligation to love God would easily appear. For as the God we worship is *the only living and true God*, the same God whom Israel worshiped heretofore, a God of infinite perfection, *besides whom there is no God*; and as he is likewise our creator and preserver; so he not only is the proper object of our worship in respect of our fear, and other religious regards, but has an undoubted right to the tribute of our love too: as we are his creatures, so he is our God. So that besides the obligations we are under on

[f] John 15. 13. Rom. 5. 7——10.

account

account of the favours of his providence, and the riches of his grace; take men as in the ſtate of nature, as creatures form'd by the hand of the Almighty, and ſupported by his power every moment of their being, they are under this obligation to love God: for he is *their God*; that is, the author of their being. But when all theſe things concur together, then the obligation is ſtronger. When we are not only related to him in common, as all mankind are, as he is the author of our being, as he is the father of men, and their preſerver; when we are not only under theſe obligations in common with others, but are peculiarly favoured with the knowledge of the way of ſalvation, and the true worſhip of God; and together with many other marks of the divine favour, have that grace beſtowed upon us, by which we are *turned from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to God* [g]; when he hath taken us into his family, that we ſhould become *his children* [h], and be allied to him in *an everlaſting covenant, order'd in all things, and ſure* [i]: as every one of theſe obligations, ſeparately conſidered, adminiſters a ſtrong motive to love God; how binding muſt the engagement be when they are all united together?

But I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak of the motives to this duty more hereafter; and therefore this ſhall ſuffice for the explication

[g] Acts 26. 18.
[h] Rom. 8. 16, 17.
[i] 2 Sam. 23. 5.

of

of the object, *the Lord our God*; becauſe this duty is founded upon our relation to God either by nature or by grace, or both conſidered together.

I ſhall therefore ſpeak now particularly to the act of *loving God*, and conſider its nature. Now as love is a principal ſpring of the ſoul, it has a powerful ſway upon the reſt of the paſſions, and determines them according as it is fixed itſelf. And therefore we ſhall find that the exerciſe of the other affections of the ſoul being under the government of love; that is made uſe of in ſcripture as comprehending the various duties we owe to God, and therefore deſerves to be more particularly conſidered; eſpecially ſince our Saviour ſpeaks of it as *the firſt and great commandment*. And if we conſult what paſſes in our own ſouls, in regard of the objects we love, we ſhall find that love does differently modify itſelf, and therefore may be diſtinguiſhed into ſeveral ſorts.

1. That love which is called *a love of deſire*. As we are intelligent creatures, we have a deſire to be happy. This is natural to us, and there is no rational being without it: 'tis a natural deſire, of which we cannot diveſt ourſelves. Even when men offer violence to themſelves, it is from a deſire they have to be happy; 'tis to put an end to their preſent troubles, or to avoid ſome greater miſery than what they are in, according to their apprehenſion, that they ex-

erciſe ſuch cruelty upon themſelves. Indeed their reaſoning is intirely wrong: for as every man has received his life from God, ſo it is not at his own diſpoſal; and he ought to do what in him lies to preſerve it. Yet this is certain, that thoſe who do this, do it to avoid a miſery they think worſe than death; and conſequently 'tis to leſſen their miſery, and ſo is from a deſire of happineſs, or a deſire of eaſing themſelves from thoſe troubles and ſorrows, and pains they are under. Now as man naturally and neceſſarily deſires to be happy; when he reflects, he finds he cannot be happy alone: ſo far from that, that men would be very miſerable if they were not to enjoy the ſociety of each other. And however the minds of ſome, from a miſguided zeal, think there is a great pleaſure in being intirely alone, as thoſe who have choſen ſolitude under a pretence of devotion; if they have fanſied themſelves happy thereby, this is to be accounted for only from the wrong judgment they make, and from a diſtemper of their imagination. It is certain man is made for ſociety, and therefore cannot be eaſy without having converſation with his fellow-creatures. However 'tis plain, that man is conſcious to himſelf that he has not a fund of happineſs in himſelf; and therefore he ſeeks it not only among his fellow-creatures, of the ſame rank and order, but among thoſe who are very much below him. The generality of mankind take

take this courſe: many are ſaying, as the pſalmiſt ſpeaks, *Who will ſhew us any good* [k]? Every one is ſeeking after ſomething that will render him more eaſy and happy, and deliver him from the miſery under which he groans, or from the dangers he fears. Men ſeek their happineſs in ſuch objects as are agreeable to their paſſions now they are corrupted and depraved: and therefore the generality of mankind *ſeek the living among the dead* [l]; ſeek happineſs where 'tis not to be found, ſeek it in gratifying their ſenſual appetites, which are rendred ſo ſenſual by the depravation of their ſouls thro' ſin: they ſeek things which are unworthy of them, and below the dignity of rational creatures to ſeek as a happineſs. For the enjoyment of happineſs they not only *uſe the things of this world*, which it is lawful to do; *but they abuſe them*, by ſetting their affections upon them after ſuch a manner, and loving them ſo as they ſhould love God; they ſeem to love them *with all their heart, and ſoul, and mind, and ſtrength.*

The love of deſire therefore, is indeed an effect of the love we bear to ourſelves. When we deſire our own happineſs, and find that we are not capable of rendring ourſelves happy, then we ſeek to other objects. Men ſeek to other objects, which they think are capable of rendring them more happy than

[k] Pſal. 4. 6. [l] Luke 24. 5.

they are: and whatſoever thoſe objects are, as there is variety of them by which men ſeek to be happy, and gratify their paſſions according to their conſtitution, or the prejudices which have been conveyed to them by others; ſo they place their love.

Now this love of deſire is, in the higheſt degree, and above all other objects, due unto God. The prophet ſhewed his wiſdom in placing it here: *With my ſoul have I deſired thee in the night, and with my ſpirit within me will I ſeek thee early* [m]. So likewiſe the pſalmiſt: *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God* [n]. Many other expreſſions we find in ſcripture which ſhew, in the wiſeſt and beſt of men, an earneſt deſire after God. It is the ſame with *hungring and thirſting after righteouſneſs* [o]. To deſire him, is to deſire communion with him, that we may receive from him all thoſe bleſſings and advantages which ſhall make us truly happy.

This ariſes, I ſay, from the love we bear to ourſelves: this love of deſire, by which we are rendred ſo earneſt and zealous, and importunate in our addreſſes to God that we may enjoy his favour, ariſes properly from the love we bear ourſelves; becauſe *in his favour is happineſs.* It is a true and a religious love, tho it ariſes from a love we bear to ourſelves; becauſe 'tis proper that

[m] Iſa. 26. 9.
[n] Pſal. 42. 1.
[o] Mat. 5. 6.

we

we ſhould reaſon well and juſtly: and 'tis to reaſon rightly, for us to conceive that we ourſelves have not a fund of happineſs in our own ſouls. Is it not right reaſoning, that the creatures can't furniſh us with happineſs, but that this muſt conſiſt in our enjoyment of God; and that he is the fountain of happineſs to us? *There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good?* but, ſays the pſalmiſt, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me. Thou haſt put gladneſs in mine heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increaſed* [p]. All are deſiring happineſs: ſome place it in the things of this world, as corn and wine, in temporal proſperity, in riches, honours, and pleaſures: but theſe can't ſatisfy the ſoul; they are not proper objects for our love of deſire. We may have ſuch a regard for them as God has ſeen fit to allow; but we muſt not place our hearts upon theſe things. We muſt *ſet our affections upon things above* [q], upon God himſelf: he is the proper object of the love of deſire; for he alone can ſatisfy our ſouls, and render us truly and completely happy. But,

2. There is another kind of love; or love is modified after another manner, and ſo may be termed a *love of complacency*. As a love of deſire is that which ſuppoſes our indigence and emptineſs, and puts us upon

[p] Pſal. 4. 6, 7. | [q] Col. 3. 2.

ſeeking after ſuch objects as may ſatisfy this affection; ſo the love of complacency is, when thoſe objects are enjoyed. The pleaſure which a covetous man takes in his heaps of money, the pleaſure an ambitious man takes in the honours he has acquired, or a voluptuous man in his ſenſual gratifications, at the moment he enjoys them, may be termed a love of complacency. He takes a great deal of delight in them, ſuppoſing he ſhall enjoy yet more. For, *he that loveth ſilver, ſhall not be ſatisfied with ſilver*[r]; as the wiſe man obſerves. But whatſoever ſatisfaction men take, whatſoever pleaſure they have in the enjoyment of theſe things, ſtill this engages their hearts to love theſe objects from which they receive this pleaſure, and from which they hope for more. This is called a love of complacency.

Now when we are required *to love God*, it is with this kind of love; that as we ſhould deſire him, from the ſenſe of our own emptineſs, that he may be our portion and our happineſs, who alone is capable of rendring us bleſſed; ſo we ſhould take the higheſt delight in the ſenſe of his favour. And ſurely to enjoy the favour of God, and the light of his countenance, to conceive ourſelves the objects of his loving kindneſs; this gives a great pleaſure and delight to the ſoul, and far ſurpaſſes whatſoever this world can afford: as the pſalmiſt ſays, in the place

[r] Eccl. 5. 10.

already

already cited, *Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increaſed.* The love of deſire reſpects the object beloved as abſent; the love of complacency has regard to it as being preſent and enjoyed. And ſo God is ſpoken of, as *taking delight* in his people [f], and *reſting in his love* towards them [s]; that is, taking complacency in them: tho they are not capable of furniſhing any new pleaſures to him who is infinitely ſatisfied with his own perfections; yet he has that regard to them, and that favour for them, as one friend has for another when he takes a pleaſure in his converſation.

3. Another kind of love which we owe to God, is *a love of gratitude.* We find ourſelves diſpoſed to love them who love us, and have ſhewn it by what they have beſtowed upon us: and all mankind are agreed 'tis a heinous crime to be guilty of ingratitude, and not make returns of love to thoſe who have expreſſed theirs to us after any eminent manner, by the benefits and favours they have beſtowed upon us. As to a love of deſire, it regards the object beloved, as I ſaid before, as not yet enjoyed; and the love of complacency looks upon itſelf as enjoying it: ſo the love of gratitude looks back upon its object as having enjoyed it, and thereby received ſatisfaction in ſome degree or other. 'Tis very juſt and reaſonable amongſt men,

[f] Prov. 11, 20. | [s] Zeph. 3. 17.

that there ſhould be grateful returns made to benefactors: how much more then does this love of gratitude belong to God, to whom we owe all we do enjoy, and all that we can hope for, towards making us truly happy? This love of gratitude particularly regards that favour which he has been already pleaſed to exhibit to us. *I love the Lord,* ſays the pſalmiſt, *becauſe he hath heard my voice, and my ſupplications* [t]. *O love the Lord, all ye his ſaints; for the Lord preſerveth the faithful* [u]. He excites men to love God on account of the benefits they have received at his hand. Nothing can be more juſt and reaſonable than this; nothing more natural, than that love ſhould produce love: and *herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us.* This is the love of gratitude, which is excited and moved by the ſenſe of the divine favour and love. And who is capable of enumerating to how great a degree this love of gratitude may ariſe? Unleſs we could reckon up all the benefits and favours which God has beſtowed upon us, and all the circumſtances which enhance theſe bleſſings, and all the provocations which have rendred us unfit objects to have theſe favours beſtowed upon us; we muſt neceſſarily fall ſhort. But,

[t] Pſal. 116. 1. | [u] Pſal. 31. 23.

4. There

4. There is another kind of love likewiſe, or another modification of the ſame love in the ſouls of men; and that is, *a love of eſteem*, which appears more diſintereſted than the other. For the love of deſire is founded upon ourſelves, and our own deſire of happineſs; the love of complacency likewiſe reſults from this; the love of gratitude appears more generous, for this is a return to the favours we have received; yet with this love of gratitude may be mixed a regard to what we may farther enjoy from the ſame being who has been the author of our happineſs already: but the love of eſteem, conſidered abſtractedly, regards not properly our own happineſs, as the other does, but regards the object itſelf, the perfections which are in that object, and the amiableneſs of thoſe perfections. Thus we may ſuppoſe thoſe angels, who are *miniſtring ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter to the heirs of ſalvation* [w], to love mankind: not that they are capable of beſtowing favours upon them, not that they can expect happineſs from creatures ſo much below them, eſpecially in our preſent ſtate; but if they love mankind, as we may ſuppoſe they do, from the benignity of their natures; if they have an eſteem for us, it is for what they ſee valuable in us, either conſidered as the product of the hand of God in the courſe of nature, or as refined and reformed by grace. Men love creatures of an

[w] Heb. 1. 14.

inferior rank to themſelves, as they ſee there are certain qualities in them which are deſirable. Men love thoſe whom they have never known perſonally, and whom they are never like to ſee, when they have heard of the fame of their wiſdom and knowledge, and piety, and other virtues. And after this manner we bear a love to thoſe who have lived many ages before us, from the extraordinary characters they have had in the world, tho we never received any favour from them, or can ever expect any, and ſo can't love them with a love of deſire, or complacency, or gratitude; yet we may love them with a love of eſteem. Thus we may love the patriarchs and prophets, and apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour; and thus we may love the great men in all ages, of whoſe characters we read.

And after this manner we are *to love God* eſpecially; for in him do meet all perfections whatſoever. To love him with a love of eſteem, is to love him becauſe he is lovely in himſelf, without conſidering what favours are derived to us. This is the true foundation of love; for what can be more juſt than to love what is lovely, and to love it in proportion to its lovelineſs? Now if God be holy, juſt, and good, and true, and his moral perfections are more amiable than his natural perfections, ſuch as omniſcience, and omnipotence, and the like; if he be an infinitely perfect being, and be ſo lovely; then

as

as his perfections are infinite, he must be infinitely loved: however, he must be loved with the utmost force of our affections; *with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our minds, and with all our strength.* Whatsoever good qualities there are in creatures, which we sometimes call perfections, whatsoever virtues there are, whatsoever is improved by grace, beyond what could be otherwise done in the souls of men; these things are lovely, these things have charms which attract the love of those who consider things in their own nature: and even vicious men have been constrained sometimes to speak in favour of inward and real goodness, the lustre and glory of it has been so great. How much more does it become us to love God, who has all perfections in himself, and after such a manner as is infinite and absolute; so that 'tis impossible for us fully to comprehend any one of them? However, the lustre and glory from the general idea we have of the divine perfections, call for our love after this manner. And this love is so much the more noble and generous, because it terminates on God himself upon the account of his being lovely; it takes its rise from his perfections, and so terminates in him as being naturally lovely in himself, without considering his being our great benefactor, and the obligations we are under to him.

5. Another

5. Another manner of love there is, which is called *a love of good-will.* This amongſt men is that by which we wiſh and deſire the happineſs of another, and are prompted to do what we can to promote it; and in proportion to the intenſeneſs of our good-will to our fellow-creatures, ſo we excel the more in acts of charity. Thoſe perſons who are very ſuperior to others, wiſh well to their inferiors: they deſire that others in pain and adverſity may be eaſy and happy. Now this love is eminent in God towards us; eſpecially in the great gift of his Son, when he ſent him into the world to die for our ſins. Then the angels celebrated the praiſes of God's good-will: *Glory be to God in the higheſt, peace on earth, and good-will towards men* [x]. And, *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life* [y]. But it may be ſuppoſed that this kind of love, the love of good-will, is not the love we owe to God; becauſe he has all perfection in his nature, is ſelf-ſufficient, and therefore does not need any of our good acts. *Our goodneſs extends not to him* [z]: our good-will may extend itſelf to creatures who are indigent; but God is infinitely happy in himſelf.

'Tis very true, that on this account the perfection of the divine Being is above being

[x] Luke 2. 14.
[y] John 3. 16.
[z] Pſal. 16. 2.

capable

capable of our love of good-will in that ſenſe. But yet there is a limited ſenſe in which the love of good-will may appear to be owing to God. If he be infinitely happy in himſelf, yet we may wiſh that his infinite perfections may be diſplayed amongſt his creatures: and tho he is infinitely glorious in himſelf, that he may be actually more glorified in the world. And this is a love which is called *zeal*; that regard which we have to the publiſhing of God's praiſe, and the diffuſing his honour in the world, that many creatures may be engaged to glorify him. The pſalmiſt does not only call upon *his ſoul, and all that is within him to bleſs God* [a]; but calls upon the whole creation to celebrate his praiſe, according to the capacity of the ſeveral creatures [b]. And as God is conſidered in relation to his church, and ſo is one with his people, that *in all their afflictions he is afflicted*, and *whatſoever is done for* the relief of *them, is* taken as *done to himſelf, and ſhall not loſe its reward*, as our bleſſed Saviour declares [c]; ſo this love of good-will, tho God is infinitely exalted above it, yet may be beſtowed upon thoſe who are dear to him, and ſo related that he takes it as done to himſelf. 'Tis true, this will fall under the notion of love to men: yet this notion of love to men is founded upon the principle of love to God; and when our love to our fellow-creatures

[a] Pſal. 103. 1.
[b] Ver. 21, 22.
[c] Mat. 10. 42.

proceeds

proceeds from a regard to God, this may be interpreted as a love of good-will towards him, tho he is above all neceſſity and indigence, and is infinitely ſatisfied in his own perfections.

Thus have I explained to you after what manner we are to love God. We are to deſire him as being alone capable of making us happy, as being the fountain of good, and of true and ſolid happineſs. We are to take complacency and delight in the enjoyment of him, when we have communion with him in any of his ſacred appointments; when we receive the tokens of his favour, and when we offer our ſolemn ſervices to him: when we take delight in theſe, this is loving God with a love of complacency. We are to love him with a love of gratitude, on account of his favours; and we are to ſtrive that our gratitude may be in proportion to the greatneſs and number of the divine bleſſings: tho after all the grateful efforts which we make, we fall infinitely ſhort of what God deſerves at our hands. We are to love him with a love of eſteem, on the account of the infinitely lovely perfections of his divine nature, who is *exalted above all bleſſing and praiſe* [d], and above all the powers of love, either in men or angels: however, as he is infinitely lovely, he is to be loved with all our powers and faculties. We are, moreover, to love him with a love of good-will,

[d] Neh. 9. 5.

ſo

ſo far as he is capable of receiving that kind of love: ſo as to deſire the advancement of his glory and truth among men, and that his name and perfections may be diſplayed in the world; and ſo as may diſpoſe us to ſhew to thoſe who are nearly allied to him, the kindneſs which he requires at our hands, becauſe they are the objects of this love of good-will, and 'tis taken as ſhewn to God himſelf.

II. The ſecond thing propoſed, was *the extent and vehemence* of this love. We are *to love God with all our heart, and with all our ſoul, and with all our mind, and with all our ſtrength:* which words expreſs both the *extent and intenſeneſs* of this love. And here I ſhould ſhew you, that to love God *with all our heart and mind, with all our ſoul and ſtrength*, without a nice determination what each of theſe expreſſions peculiarly ſignify, does at leaſt comprehend in it that we ſhould love him with all the powers and faculties he has given us, both of body and mind: that all our affections, all the paſſions of our ſouls, ſhould be under the influence and conduct of divine love: that our thoughts, our underſtandings, our reaſon and judgment, ſhould be exerciſed in doing thoſe things which are agreeable to God, and whereby we may expreſs our love to him: that the bent of our ſouls ſhould be towards him: that the faculty of ſpeech, and our external

external actions, ſhould be employed to the ſame purpoſe to glorify him, from the ſame principle of love to him: that we ſhould uſe the eſtate he gives us, the reputation we have in the world, the talents which are agreeable amongſt men, to influence them to love him, and to expreſs thereby our love to God: that we ſhould uſe the opportunities and means which his providence furniſhes us with, for this purpoſe: and that our love ſhould riſe to the higheſt degree poſſible: that we ſhould aſpire to love him more and more: that we ſhould be uniform, and perſevering in our love to him, and not content ourſelves with ſome ſudden fits and ſtarts of devotion, but be regular and conſtant in loving God: that this ſhould be the principle of all our actions. And farther, that we ſhould love him after a manner ſuperior to any love we beſtow upon any of his creatures: that the love we pay to his creatures, ſhould be in ſubordination to the love we owe him, and ſhould be regulated by our love to him, which is the principle of all true religion: that we ſhould love others with a reference unto God, with reference to his will and to his glory; to his will as the rule, and his glory as the end of the motions of our ſouls.

III. The third and laſt thing would have been to ſhew you, *the dignity and importance* of this command of loving God after ſuch a

manner. This is expreſſed by its being called *the firſt, or the greateſt commandment.* And here I ſhould have ſhewn you, it may be called *firſt* in regard of the order of nature; and likewiſe *firſt*, that is, chief or principal, in regard of its dignity, when compared with other precepts. The importance of this duty would likewiſe appear, in that love to God is to regulate all the reſt of our affections. Whom we love we ſhall fear to offend; we ſhall mourn when he is diſpleaſed, or when we do any thing unbecoming us, and contrary to the reſpect we owe him. Love to God will raiſe in our minds a holy indignation againſt ſin; and, as conſcious of our guilt, will make us *abhor ourſelves, and repent in duſt and aſhes* [c]. Love will inſpire us with hope in his goodneſs and mercy: love will govern all the paſſions of our minds: love will diſpoſe our thoughts to project things which tend to his glory, ſuch as may appear to be genuine expreſſions of our affection to him. Love to God is to regulate our love to ourſelves: we muſt not ſo love ourſelves, our eaſe and pleaſure, our honour and reputation in the world; we muſt not ſo love our lives themſelves as to do any thing that is contrary to the love we owe to God: and in proportion to the degree of our love to God, are our duties diſcharged on our part, and accepted on his. Our prayer is ſo much the more acceptable to God, by

[c] Job 42. 6.

how

how much the more we love him; and ſo the reſt of our religious ſervices. And in regard of our duties to men, when we are juſt and charitable, when we are performing the particular duties which belong to the civil life; by how much the more we love God, and by how much the more this principle influences us in theſe duties, ſo much the more are they acceptable to him.

But theſe things would require a more particular conſideration than our preſent limits will allow. I ſhall therefore conclude with making a reflection or two upon what has been ſaid.

1. We ſee already by the account which has been given concerning the love we owe to God, that it is a very extenſive duty. And if it be ſo, how much does it concern us to examine ourſelves upon this account, and ſee whether we love God after this manner? whether we deſire him ſo that we can ſay, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee* [f]. Whether we take ſuch delight and complacency in him, as to account this world *as dung and droſs* in compariſon of him? and that our *affections* are ſo placed *upon things above* [g], as to deſpiſe things below? Whether we ſtir up our ſouls with a love of gratitude, as the pſalmiſt did; *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and all that is within me bleſs his*

[f] Pſal. 73. 25. | [g] Phil. 3. 8.

holy

holy name [h], &c. Whether we can ſay, *O what ſhall I render to the Lord for all his benefits* [i]? and are uneaſy in our minds becauſe we can't make ſo large returns of gratitude as we think he deſerves at our hands? Whether we have that eſteem of the divine perfections which we ought to have? and whether we love him as he is infinitely juſt and holy, as well as becauſe he is infinitely merciful? Whether our love to him kindles a zeal in our breaſts to promote his glory and honour; and, as much as in us lies, to diſplay it in the world? Whether we are always willing and ready to ſhew our love to him by our affectionate regard to his people? Let us thus examine ourſelves: and certainly it can be no difficult matter to know whether we truly love God, if we thus look into ourſelves. As to this world, we can tell what objects we love, whoſe company is agreeable to us: we can tell whom we love with a love of friendſhip; what wordly objects our ſouls moſt deſire and purſue; upon what our thoughts principally turn. And certainly if we love God after an intenſe manner, *with all our heart and ſoul, with all our mind and ſtrength*, we muſt needs know it: certainly we can tell whither the powers of our ſouls tend, and whether we love him after ſuch a manner as has been explained. If we do; then this, as it is *the firſt and great commandment*, will govern us in the

[h] Pſal. 103. 1. [i] Pſal. 116. 12.

courſe of our lives. And as we ſhould examine ourſelves upon this, ſo this ſhews us,

2. The excellency and perfection of our holy religion. For if this be the great commandment, and all religion centers in this; then 'tis eaſy to be demonſtrated that our religion is the beſt and trueſt ſcheme that can be in the world: becauſe nothing can be more evident, than that a being who is infinitely lovely, ſhould be loved after ſuch a manner. No religion ſo conſiſtent as that which makes this the prime and the great commandment, and to govern the reſt. And eſpecially are we engaged hereunto now under the goſpel; becauſe the more God has diſplayed his love to us, the ſtronger are the motives, and the clearer the demonſtration how much we ought to love him. *If any man love not our Lord Jeſus*, ſays the apoſtle, *let him be Anathema, Maranatha* [k]. He devotes him to a bitter curſe, if, under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, he does not love his bleſſed Saviour, who has ſo ſignalized his love to us, in that *he has laid down his life for our ſakes*. And tho this love to God is a duty preſcribed to us in the divine law, and ſo a part of natural religion; yet is it *a duty* more eſpecially incumbent on us under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, as it is inforced by ſtronger motives: for, *God having manifeſted his love* to fallen man *by the gift of his Son*, the ſtronger obligation lies

[k] 1 Cor. 16. 22.

upon

upon us, *to love him who has ſo loved us, as to waſh us from our ſins in his own blood, and make us kings and prieſts to God, that we may reign with him for ever and ever* [1].

[1] Rev. 1. 5, 6.

SERMON XV.

The unchangeable duration of the MORAL LAW considered.

MATT. V. 18.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

IN this, and the two following chapters, we have the sermon which our Saviour delivered upon the mount. Being baptized, he entred upon his publick ministry, and the execution of his prophetical office; which he discharged in every respect as became him. And being to introduce a new religion; new, I say, in some sort, tho it was founded upon what had been declared heretofore; he begins as became one who would excite the attention of the people to what he had to deliver. As men naturally

naturally aſpire after bleſſedneſs, and the great queſtion is, *Who will ſhew us any good* [m]? eſpecially, who will ſhew us the ſupreme good, the chief end and happineſs of man; ſo our Lord begins his diſcourſe with pronouncing bleſſings upon thoſe who would be truly virtuous and religious: and indeed this is the character the apoſtles give of him; they ſay, *God ſent his Son Jeſus to bleſs us* [n]. He pronounces bleſſedneſs upon the *humble*, the *meek*, thoſe who *aſpire after purity of heart and mind*, the *ſincere*, the *merciful*, thoſe who are *charitable*, and willing to *make peace* in the world, thoſe who *hunger after righteouſneſs*, and thoſe who *ſuffer for righteouſneſs-ſake* [o]: and after having ſhewn the neceſſary connection between holineſs and happineſs, he addreſſes himſelf to ſuch as would be willing to be his diſciples, by preſſing them to put in practice the duties which he had recommended, and to which he had promiſed ſo great bleſſings; that ſo they might appear as *the ſalt of the earth*, as *the light of the world*, and *ſhine before men by their good works, ſo that their heavenly Father might be glorified* [p]. Our Lord having recommended theſe virtues and the practice of them, had a fair occaſion to let the Scribes and Phariſees, who were very captious, and ready to criticiſe upon his doctrine, know

[m] Pſal. 4. 6.
[n] Acts 3. 26.
[o] Ver. 1——12.
[p] Ver. ——16.

that he did not come to overturn the religion which God had eſtabliſhed in the world; that he did not come to deſtroy morality, and to introduce a new ſcheme and ſyſtem as to the ſum and ſubſtance thereof; but to confirm that which was moſt material, and of the greateſt conſequence under the former diſpenſation. Therefore ſays he, in the 17th verſe, *Think not that I am come to deſtroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil.* Then follow the words of our text: *Verily I ſay unto you, till heaven and earth paſs, one jot or one tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the law, till all be fulfilled.* q. d. "Do not imagine that I am "come to aboliſh the law, and the pro- "phets, to deſtroy and nullify them: I am "not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil them; "to obey this law, and recommend obedi- "ence to it, as that which is neceſſary, if "men will aſpire after happineſs in ſuch a "way as to attain it. For this law, of which "I am ſpeaking, as if our Saviour ſhould "ſay, is ſo firm and durable, that heaven "and earth ſhall paſs away, before one jot "or tittle of that ſhall fail, or paſs away; "for it muſt be all fulfilled."

Theſe words give us occaſion to conſider,

I. What is here preciſely ſignified by *the law*; the duration of which Chriſt affirms by ſo very expreſs terms.

II. The

II. The import of thoſe terms by which the duration of this law, whatever it be, is expreſſed. And,

III. The reaſons of the duration of it.

I. What is here ſignified by *the law.*

The law here ſpoken of, muſt be ſome law which was known to the Jews: for our Saviour is now preaching amongſt them, and ſpeaks of it to them as a thing well known, calling it *the law.* It muſt be a written law; no oral tradition, but a written law: for our Lord refers in this chapter to ſeveral paſſages of it written in the old teſtament, and ſpeaks of the duration of *every jot or tittle of it*; that is, of every the leaſt part and particle, the leaſt letter or point which related to it: by which it is evident he refers to a written law. Now the written laws which God had given the Jews, are reducible to theſe three heads; the *ceremonial*, the *judicial*, and the *moral.* The ceremonial law conſiſted of various rites and inſtitutions, of divers ſacrifices, waſhings, and purifications, and other ordinances which are called *carnal commandments* [q], and were deſigned indeed to continue for a ſeaſon, *till the time of the reformation*, till the time of the goſpel; but then it was to expire, and give way to an inſtitution which was more glorious. The judicial law conſiſted of precepts calculated for the people and nation of the Jews, and adjuſted to

[q] Heb. 9. 10.

their diviſion into tribes, to their ſettlement in the land of Canaan, and the circumſtances of their political and civil ſtate, as they were a people whoſe government God himſelf was pleaſed to form and model for them: and theſe judicial laws, ſo far as they depend upon the moral law, and are neceſſarily deduced from thence, regard other nations as well as them. As for the moral law, which is calculated for perſons under all diſpenſations, this is the moſt common notion of it: that which is perpetual, and regards not only the church of God under one diſpenſation but under others, and ariſes and reſults from that relation wherein we ſtand to God and to one another; and ſo conſiſts of two tables, which God was pleaſed to give to the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs: for he then revived the moral law, when he gave them two tables of ſtone inſcribed with thoſe laws which regarded their duty both towards God and towards men. Now the law in our text muſt either reſpect all theſe three ſorts of laws, or ſome one or two of them.

It does not ſeem probable that it ſhould reſpect them all; becauſe our Saviour declares, that it is not the deſign of his coming to diſſolve or aboliſh this law, of which he is here ſpeaking, whatever it be; and becauſe he elſewhere ſo ſtrictly prohibits the diſſolving or breaking any precept of it. And if we conſider particularly the ceremonial law, and the judicial law, ſo far as

it

it reſpected the Jewiſh polity particularly; we ſhall find it very hard to fix this ſenſe to either of them; that our Lord ſhould affirm he did not come to diſſolve the ceremonial, or the judicial law, when he ſaid, *Think not that I am come to deſtroy the law or the prophets*; or to *diſſolve*, as the word might be rendred more properly [r]. It will be hard to prove that our Lord ſaid concerning either of theſe, *I am not come to diſſolve, but to fulfil* [s]; *for verily I ſay unto you, till heaven and earth paſs, one jot or one tittle of the law ſhall in no wiſe fail, till all be fulfilled.*

For it is evident, that Chriſt did come to diſſolve the ceremonial law: he came *by one offering to perfect for ever them that are ſanctified* [s]. And the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews ſufficiently ſhews that the perfection of that offering put an end to all the reſt: they were repeated till this perfect offering came; but when this was preſented, then that text was fulfilled, *Sacrifice and offerings thou wouldſt not* [t]. The apoſtle to the Hebrews declares that *there was a change of the prieſthood*, of the prieſthood of Aaron to that of Chriſt, which is of *the order of Melchizedek*; and he infers from thence *a change of the law* [u]. He declares that that law was abrogated, or *diſannulled, for the weakneſs and unprofitableneſs of it* [v]: it was therefore called *carnal*, and conſiſted

[r] καταλῦσαι.
[s] Mat. 5. 17.
[s] Heb. 10. 14.
[t] Heb. 10. 8. Pſal. 40. 6.
[u] Heb. 7. 12.
[v] Ver. 18.

in

in temporal things. So that it is plain Chriſt did come to diſſolve the ceremonial law: he *blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances*, as the apoſtle tells us in the 2d to the Coloſſians, *ver.* 14. *and nailed it to his croſs*; thoſe ordinances *which were againſt us.* It were very eaſy to prove this from a great many texts of ſcripture: but it ſhall ſuffice to add, that our Saviour himſelf declares this, that he came to put an end to the ceremonial law. For it was neceſſary, by the ceremonial law, that perſons ſhould come to the public worſhip of God at Jeruſalem, whether Jews or Gentiles: they were to fly to that houſe of God, and there to ſerve him. But our Lord ſaid to the woman of Samaria; *The hour cometh, and now is, when neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jeruſalem, ye ſhall worſhip the Father; but the true worſhipers ſhall worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth* [w]. Not in Jeruſalem, or *in this mountain*, ſays he: *but wherever* God ſhall be *worſhiped in ſpirit and in truth*, there ſhall be his temple; he will accept of that ſervice. So that our Saviour did come to diſſolve the ceremonial law.

Moreover, in the verſe foregoing our text, our Lord is ſpeaking of *the law and the prophets* together. Now the prophets work was partly to predict things to come concerning the kingdom of the Meſſias; and partly to reprove the people for their ſins, and awaken

[w] John 4. 21, 23.

them

them to repentance. It is true indeed, that Chriſt did not come to diſſolve the prophecies in any reſpect, but to fulfil and accompliſh them. But here *prophets* ſeem to ſignify that part of their prophecies which regards the law as commenting upon it. So elſewhere our Saviour expreſſes himſelf, when he ſpeaks of *the law and the prophets: Therefore all things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the law and the prophets* [x]. That is, this moral duty is a very ſummary one; which contains the ſubſtance of the laws delivered in the holy ſcripture, and the comments of the prophets upon them. And ſo in another place: *Jeſus ſays,* to one of the Phariſees, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind: this is the firſt and great commandment. And the ſecond is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf. On theſe two commandments hang all the law and the prophets* [y]. Which is as much as to ſay, all moral duties depend upon theſe two great commandments, of loving God and our neighbour. So that in this paſſage *the law and the prophets* ſignify all moral duties; the doing to others as we would have others do to us: our Lord ſignifies that this is a moral point; and in ſpeaking of *the law and the prophets,* ſpeaks of what is frequently recommended by them, the obſervation of that moral law

[x] Mat. 7. 12. | [y] Mat. 22. 37——40.

upon which they frequently comment. And unleſs *the law and the prophets*, according to the ſcripture-uſe of the phraſe, can ſignify the ceremonial law, it ſeems not fair to make that interpretation of it here. But it is plain *the law and the prophets* ſignify the moral law, becauſe that is diſtinguiſhed as *the law* by way of eminency. We ſhall ſee farther how our Lord interprets the law in this ſermon; and that that law, ſo many parts and paſſages of which he is explaining in the ſequel of his diſcourſe, muſt be the law which is ſpoken of in the words of our text. Now Chriſt is not here explaining the ceremonial law: therefore it cannot probably be that.

In the words immediately after our text, he forbids men to teach or practiſe any thing that might look like the violation of this law of which he is ſpeaking: *Whoſoever therefore ſhall break one of theſe leaſt commandments, and ſhall teach men ſo, he ſhall be called the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven; but whoſoever ſhall do and teach them, the ſame ſhall be called great in the kingdom of heaven* [z]. Now it is not likely that our Lord ſpeaks here of the ceremonial law, when it is certain that the apoſtles did teach the abrogation of the ceremonial law, and yet were counted *the greateſt in the kingdom of heaven* [a]. The *kingdom of heaven* ſig-

[z] Mat. 5. 19. [a] *Chap.* 11. 11.

nifies

nifies the evangelic ſtate, whether of grace or glory: and that ſeems to make appear what this law is. It is a law which belongs to *the kingdom of heaven*, to the ſtate of the goſpel: which the ceremonial law could not do, and therefore expired upon the introduction of a better miniſtration. It is a law, as appears by the words of our text, which is to continue *as long as heaven and earth*; whereas the ceremonial law was ſoon to expire. About three years after our Saviour preached this doctrine, that was to expire, and to be nailed to his croſs: and was it likely that he ſhould ſpeak of the continuance of that as long as heaven and earth, which was ſo ſoon to be at an end? So that I think theſe words cannot juſtly be applied to the ceremonial law.

If it be ſaid that the ceremonial law did not paſs *till it was fulfilled*, and that it was fulfilled by Chriſt, in as much as by his ſufferings he appeared to be the ſubſtance of thoſe ſhadows; I anſwer, our Saviour is not ſpeaking here of *fulfilling the law* by way of antitype, but of fulfilling the law by way of obedience to it: therefore he cenſures ſo much thoſe men who ſhould *break the leaſt of thoſe commandments*, or ſhould teach the breach of them to others. Now tho our Lord fulfilled the ceremonial law as the antitype; yet he taught, and his diſciples after him, that it was to expire and come to an end, and that it muſt therefore be

be broken. And to this purpose you may see the 5th chapter of John, *ver.* 18. where this word, as well as in some other places, is used: *Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father; making himself equal with God.* I only cite the text for the word *broken*, as being the same word which is used in our text and context [b], either the primitive or derivative, which is much the same thing. Now *to break the sabbath*, is to act contrary to that law. So here our Lord is speaking of acting contrary to that law by breaking a precept. And it is certain the ceremonial law was to be broken this way. After the death of Christ, that was to expire as to its efficacy; and therefore it could be no longer obliging. Again: John 7. 23. *If a man on the sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken* [c]; *are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath-day?* When persons were circumcised, that law of Moses was not broken but kept: therefore if this be the same word with that in our text and context, we cannot suppose our Saviour intends that the ceremonial law should not be broken; that is, that circumcision, and other ceremonies, should not be omitted. For this was taught by his disciples, and was necessa-

[b] λύει τὸ σάββατον. | [c] μὴ λυθῇ νόμος.

rily

rily conſequent upon his death. So that *fulfilling*, in our text, is in oppoſition to *breaking*. Now it was lawful to act contrary to the ceremonial law, when once the obligation ceaſed: therefore that was ſpoken of as aboliſhed. See one paſſage more for this word, becauſe it tends much to clear the ſenſe of the text: John 10. 35. *If he called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the ſcripture cannot be broken* [d]; that is, cannot be diſſolved, cannot be vacated, cannot be made of none effect. And yet the ceremonial law was thus diſſolved and vacated, and made of none effect. So that I think it is plain, from the whole context, that the ceremonial law is not that which our Lord ſays he came *not to deſtroy* or to diſſolve; becauſe he did come indeed that it might be vacated and abrogated.

As for the judicial law, ſo far as it regarded the polity of the Jews, Chriſt did come to put an end to that: for he came to *break down the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles*; and to *aboliſh the enmity*, as the apoſtle ſpeaks to the Epheſians [e]. The *law* was *to go forth from Sion* [f], and the *word of the Lord from Jeruſalem* [g], into the ſeveral parts of the world; and not *in Jeruſalem* only, or *in the mount of Samaria* [h], but wherever God was *worſhiped in ſpirit and*

[d] ἡ δύναται λυθῆναι.
[e] Eph. 2. 14, 15, 16.
[f] Iſa. 2. 3.
[g] Mic. 4. 2.
[h] John 4. 21, 22, 23.

in

in truth, that worſhip was to be accepted by him. And as *he came to his own, and his own received him not* [i]; we know the conſequence of their obſtinacy was the deſtruction of their city and temple, and the diſſipation of that people thro'out the ſeveral parts of the world. So that Chriſt could not ſay he came *not to deſtroy* the Jewiſh law ſo far as it regarded their peculiar polity, and ſo far as it regarded the ceremonial law.

It remains therefore that it muſt be the moral law, as written and contain'd in the two tables, which our Saviour refers to in ſaying, *one jot or one tittle ſhall not paſs away*. This is that law, of which he mentions various paſſages in this chapter. It appears, I ſay, to be the law of the decalogue, all the laws of the decalogue.

1. Becauſe this is agreeable to what our Lord ſpeaks before concerning the bleſſedneſs of thoſe who ſhould perform ſuch virtues and duties as it requires. It is the moral law: that law which requires *poverty of ſpirit, and humility*; which requires *meekneſs*, and an earneſt *deſire after righteouſneſs*; which requires *purity of heart*, or ſincerity, and ſpiritual-mindedneſs: that law which the apoſtle ſpeaks of as *holy, juſt and good* [k]. It is the moral law which requires *mercy*,

[i] John 1. 11. | [k] Rom. 7. 12.

and

and *charity*, and *the love of peace*. All these are moral virtues, upon which Christ pronounces so many blessings: and therefore it is but reasonable that we should interpret *the law* he here speaks of, to be the moral law.

2. This appears in that our Lord is recommending to his disciples such a law as should *make their good works shine before men*[1]. Now the works of the ceremonial rites, whatever satisfaction some men might take in them, and however for the time being they might be agreeable to the will of God; yet these do not make *our light shine before men* as our moral virtues do. *Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven. Men* signifies the Gentiles as well as the Jews; and the Jews could not recommend their conversation to the Gentiles, to the men of the world, except in the practice of moral duties: therefore there must be regard had to that in these words. Besides, this is that law which the prophets especially recommend, while they often speak very low of the ceremonial performances. Thus Isaiah both begins and ends his prophecy: *To what purpose is the multitude of your oblations*[m]? *He that killeth an ox, is as he that killeth a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as he that cutteth off a dog's*

[1] Mat. 5. 16. — [m] Isa. 1. 11.

neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered ſwines blood; and he that burneth incenſe, as if he bleſſed an idol[n]: that is, while the people remained impure and immoral in their hearts and lives, their external rites and ceremonies would do them little ſervice. In the 50th Pſalm there is a very remarkable paſſage to this purpoſe; which ſhews that the prophets had no great occaſion to reprove them for the breach of the ceremonial laws, for they were often very nice and punctual in the performance of them, but very remiſs in moral duties. Ver. 8. *I will not reprove thee for thy ſacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me.* Ver. 9. *I will take no bullock out of thy houſe, nor he-goats out of thy folds.* Ver. 10. *For every beaſt of the foreſt is mine, and the cattle upon a thouſand hills*, &c. What follows? Ver. 14. *Offer unto God thankſgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Moſt High.* "Perform moral duties: I "do not reprove thee for want of ſacrifices, "but I reprove thee becauſe thou haſt been "immoral; thou haſt not ſerved me with "piety, ſincerity, and integrity." And thus they are often alſo reproved for their injuſtice and cruelty. And the Lord, by the mouth of the prophet Iſaiah, calls *that the faſt he hath choſen; to looſe the bands of wicked-*

[n] Iſa. 66. 3.

neſs,

neſs, to unbind the heavy burdens, and to let the oppreſſed go free; to deal their bread to the hungry, and when they ſaw the naked, to cover them [o]. To the ſame purpoſe the prophet Micah ſpeaks: *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the moſt high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil?* &c. No: *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God* [p]? Theſe are the main things which are to be performed: and it was thus on the moral law that the prophets chiefly commented. Again,

3. In the words following the text, our Saviour takes occaſion, when he had ſhewn the duration of the law, to declare unto thoſe who heard him, that *unleſs their righteouſneſs did exceed that of the Scribes and Phariſees, they ſhould in no caſe enter into the kingdom of heaven* [q]. Now can any one imagine that our Lord intends by this to recommend an obedience to the ceremonial law? It is very evident that the Scribes and Phariſees were much more punctual in obſerving that than the moral law. They

[o] Iſa. 58. 6, 7.
[p] Micah 6. 6, 7, 8.
[q] Mat. 5. 20.

even *tithed mint, anise, and cummin,* but *they neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith*[r]. So that Christ is here recommending such a *righteousness*, such a conformity to *the law of God*, as *exceeded that of the Scribes and Pharisees*; that is, exceeded ceremonial performances, and rendred men strict in observing the laws of the decalogue.

4. It farther appears, from the sequel of our Lord's discourse, that it was this law he had in view. For he mentions several particular precepts of it: he mentions that law which forbids to *kill*[s]; and shews how extensive it is in its obligation. He mentions that which forbids *adultery*[s]; and that which forbids the *taking of the name of God in vain*[t]; and that which forbids *covetousness*, &c. So that it is plain it is the law of the ten precepts which he is speaking of; because he instances in divers of them, and shews how strictly and purely they ought to be observed. It is true, our Saviour mentions sacrifice afterwards; but he mentions it only occasionally: therefore it cannot from thence be concluded that he intends to recommend the ceremonial law. He is speaking in that place of charity, and love to our brethren; shewing what care we ought to take not to foster malice in our

[r] Mat. 23. 23.
[s] *Chap.* 5. 21.
[s] Ver. 27.
[t] Ver. 33.

minds,

minds, nor ſuffer that leaven to ſour our ſouls. To this purpoſe he informs his hearers, that *when they had a ſacrifice to offer, they ſhould be firſt reconciled, if they knew their brother had ought againſt them.* Love and charity it ſeems was of the greateſt importance, and without it no ſacrifice could be acceptable. So that the tenor of Chriſt's diſcourſe is to recommend moral duties; and he draws ſeveral particular inſtances out of the law of the ten precepts: therefore I think it is plain he had regard, in our text, to the moral law.

And this is *the law* indeed by way of eminency. This is the perfect and the durable law. And therefore in the 19th and 119th Pſalm this law is ſo highly recommended, and is ſpoken of as it were the only law: *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the ſoul* [u]. Now as for the ceremonial law; that in the ſcripture is repreſented as imperfect, and only to obtain till a more perfect diſpenſation came. Thus the moral law is called *ſpiritual* [v], and the other is called *carnal* [w]. The moral law is ſaid to be *holy, ſpiritual, juſt and good*; while the law of ceremonies is repreſented as conſiſting of mere *carnal commandments and ordinances*, which appertain to *the purifying of the fleſh.* The moral law, I ſay, is the

[u] Pſal. 19. 17.
[v] Rom. 7. 14.
[w] Heb. 9. 10.

law by way of eminency: and therefore when the pſalmiſt ſays, in the 119th Pſalm, ſo many excellent things concerning the law, it muſt needs, very commonly at leaſt, be interpreted of the law of the ten words; that pſalm being calculated to celebrate the perfection and glory of it. I think therefore it hath been ſufficiently proved, that *the law* which our Saviour ſpeaks of, is the moral law of God, the moral law which is written. And where is it written, but in the decalogue, the law of the ten commandments? Divers of which laws in this chapter our Saviour inſtances in, and explains, and comments upon. I proceed therefore,

II. To conſider the import of thoſe terms by which the duration of this law is expreſſed. And,

1. We are to obſerve in what manner our Saviour ſpeaks of the duration of it in the words before our text; which is both negatively and affirmatively. He ſays, that *he came not to deſtroy this law*, whatever it be: and, on the other hand, he affirms that *he came to fulfil it* [x]; which ſignifies *to obey*, as you ſee in Rom. 13. 8. *Owe no man any thing but to love one another; for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law*; that is, hath obeyed the law, hath done what the law requires. So Gal. 5. 14. *For all the*

[x] Mat. 5. 17.

law,

law, says the apostle, *is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* The apostle is there speaking of the same moral law which he says is fulfilled, or obeyed in this, in *loving our neighbour.* So in James 2. 8——11. *If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.* So that *to fulfil the law*, is to obey the law. And the apostle shews it must be obeyed in all its points, because he who offends in one point, virtually breaks the rest; for by the same rule he might take the liberty to break others.

2. We are to observe in what strong terms our Saviour expresses the duration of the law in the words of our text. He introduces them with a strong asseveration; *Verily I say unto you:* a manner of speaking which our Lord frequently makes use of, when he speaks of matters of the greatest importance; or when he would extremely engage the attention of his hearers: so here he solemnly affirms, that *till heaven and earth*

paſs, not one jot or tittle of the law ſhould fail, till all was fulfilled. He ſpecifies the time of the duration of it, and makes it commenſurate with the world: *Till heaven and earth paſs, one jot or tittle of the law ſhould in no wiſe fail.* As he thus ſtrongly affirms the duration of the whole law, ſo he refers what he has ſaid to the ſeveral parts of it: and leſt it ſhould be thought that ſome ſpecial precepts of the decalogue were to remain, and others were to be diſſolved; he declares, in the words following, that the *leaſt* were not to be *broken*[y]. And in our text, not only does our Lord declare that one law is not to be broken, diſſolv'd, or paſs away; but not one part of any law: nay, he inſtances in that which is leſs than a word, a letter, the leaſt letter in the Hebrew alphabet, or a tittle, or a point, or an accent, or a part of a letter, as ſome render it; which is a ſort of proverbial expreſſion, but fully repreſents that the law muſt be intirely preſerved, and not any variation made in the decalogue: and this, *till heaven and earth paſs away.* Not but that ſome things of the moral law will remain even after the world is diſſolv'd: for our relation to God will make it our duty to love him for ever; and our relation to our brethren will make it neceſſary for us to love them

[y] Mat. 5. 19.

for

for ever alſo. But *until*, ſometimes does not ſignify that when that time is come, then the thing ſhall paſs away which is ſaid to continue till then. *Your iniquities ſhall not be purged away till you die* [z]: that is, you ſhall die in your ſins; but they ſhall not be purged away when you die, they ſhall never be purged away. It is not ſuppoſed at all that they ſhould be purged away after they were dead. So Chriſt *ſhall not fail nor be diſcouraged, till he hath brought judgment unto victory* [a]. It does not follow that he ſhall fail, or be diſcouraged afterwards; but the meaning is, he ſhall never fail, but ſhall bring forth judgment unto victory. So ſometimes God ſpeaks of his covenant being *eſtabliſhed as the day and night* [b]; and that *the mountains ſhould be removed, rather than what he hath ſaid ſhould fail* [c]. So that the ſubſtance of this expreſſion is, that the heavens and the earth may ſooner fail and ceaſe, than the leaſt part of the moral law ſhould loſe its obligation. And our Saviour expreſſes himſelf to the ſame purpoſe in Luke 16. 17. *It is eaſier for heaven and earth to paſs, than one tittle of the law to fail.* God may ſooner deſtroy the heavens and the earth, than deſtroy this law of his: it is eſtabliſhed ſo firmly, that you may ſooner expect the diſſolution of the world, than that he will re-

[z] Iſa. 22. 14.
[a] Iſa. 42. 3, 4. Mat. 12. 20.
[b] Jer. 33. 20.
[c] Iſa. 54. 10.

cede

cede from this law. For the duties of it are ſo becoming God to command, and man to obey, that God will ſooner break the world in pieces than that this law ſhall be vacated, and made null. So that it is the moſt forcible expreſſion that can be, to ſignify the duration of the law thro'out the world. And how contrary to the nature and deſign of God is it to abrogate ſuch a law? For it is added, *it ſhall in no wiſe paſs away.* It is not enough for men to ſay, this and that command ſhall not quite paſs away, there ſhall ſomething or other be preſerved of it, ſomething for ſubſtance like it. No: *it ſhall in no wiſe paſs away*, not *one jot or tittle*, not any part of it, *ſhall* [d] *not, not paſs away*, as the word is in the original; ſhall not in any ſenſe: but it muſt be fulfilled, it muſt be obeyed, it muſt be taught and obſerved. And this is the kingdom of heaven in the ſtate of the goſpel. Thoſe who are the miniſters in the kingdom of heaven, that is, under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, are obliged to teach theſe laws: and *he ſhall be called leaſt in the kingdom of heaven, who ſhall break any one of them, and ſhall teach men ſo.*

Thus have I ſhewn in what manner our Lord confirms the duration of the moral law. I proceed,

[d] Οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ.

III. To

III. To ſhew you the reaſons of the duration of it. As our Saviour affirms, in very forcible terms, that it muſt endure, and that it muſt not be broken, or diſſolv'd, but muſt abide; the reaſons of this may be a little briefly conſidered. And,

1. This law of which Chriſt ſpeaks, and which he recommends to his diſciples, and the continuance or duration of which he declares, is ſuited and adapted to all diſpenſations. There were ſome laws adapted to the time of the patriarchs; there were others adapted to the polity of the Jews, and to their church-ſtate or œconomy. There are ſome laws adapted to the time of the goſpel; as baptiſm, and the Lord's-ſupper, which were not in practiſe before. Theſe are called poſitive inſtitutions: but the law of *the ten words* hath had place under all theſe diſpenſations. Theſe had place under the diſpenſations before the law: and tho God after an extraordinary manner gave the law upon mount Sinai in two tables of ſtone; yet theſe were duties incumbent upon men before. This was a new edition of the law; but men were under the ſame obligations from the beginning: for every one of the duties contain'd in theſe laws, reſults from the relation betwixt God and his creatures, or that of the creatures one towards another, or their own condition with regard to them-

themſelves. So after our Saviour's aſcenſion into heaven, after the ceremonial law had been accompliſhed, and was vacated, we find that this law was ſtill recommended. The apoſtle Paul ſays, *the law is holy, juſt, and good* [c]. *Do we make void the law thro' faith? God forbid: yea, we eſtabliſh the law* [f]: which muſt be this ſame moral law. And thus the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks to Timothy: *The law is good, if a man uſe it lawfully* [g]. And various paſſages there are to the ſame purpoſe in the writings of the apoſtles. So that it is plain that this is of force thro'out the various diſpenſations of the world. It does not refer to the Jews as diſtinct from Gentiles, but to man as man: does not refer to a diſpenſation only before the goſpel, but under the goſpel. And ſeeing it is ſuited to all diſpenſations, it muſt needs therefore be in force in all diſpenſations. For a man does not owe another juſtice or charity more if he be a Jew than if he be a Gentile: nor could this duty be more incumbent upon the Jews than it is upon the Gentiles. If we are related to God, we are under the ſtrongeſt obligations to worſhip and ſerve him according to his own inſtitutions. And tho there may be poſitive inſtitutions which may vary; yet to worſhip the true God, and not to take his name in vain, and obſerve

[c] Rom. 7. 12.
[f] *Chap.* 3. 31.
[g] 1 Tim. 1. 8.

the ſabbath, &c. the reaſon of theſe are the ſame from one generation to another. Again,

2. This law of the decalogue is remark'd and characterized by God himſelf to be a durable law, in that it was given after a peculiar manner. It would be the moſt unaccountable thing in the world to imagine this of the ſame nature with the ceremonial law. This was given by God himſelf, with an audible voice, before 600000 people, beſides women and children. It was *written with the finger of God*, after a miraculous manner, *on two tables of ſtone:* a law, which, as it was written and delivered in this miraculous way, ſo it was to be kept after a peculiar manner. It is not to be imagin'd that God would have diſtinguiſhed it thus, if there were not diſtinguiſhing characters upon it in regard to its own nature, its uſefulneſs, and deſign. It is therefore highly reaſonable, that we ſhould conſider after what manner God hath honour'd it, that we may take peculiar notice of it. Nay, it is moreover, not only eſtabliſhed before the goſpel, but it acquires glory under the diſpenſation of the goſpel: for the accompliſhment of it is recommended to us by greater motives; and holineſs and purity, which is the conformity to the law of God, are raiſed to a greater height under the goſpel. So that the goſpel is ſo far from aboliſhing

aboliſhing this law, that it improves the minds of men, and renders them more capable of obeying and fulfilling it.

3. We are to conſider, that if this law of the decalogue could be diſſolved, aboliſhed and vacated, then there had been no need for Chriſt to die: for if the law could have been diſſolved, there had been no need of a mediator to ſatisfy for our tranſgreſſing it. The way would have been to diſſolve it, and ſo ſin would have ceaſed: for, *where there is no law, there is no tranſgreſſor* [h]; and where there is no tranſgreſſor, there is no ſin, there is no puniſhment, or any need of an atoning ſacrifice. And,

4. Nothing can be ſo injurious to the chriſtian religion, or hurtful to the ſouls of men, as to pretend that it vacates the moral law: for there is nothing which can render men ſo great and excellent, and ſo like to God, as a conformity to his holy law. And if Chriſt came to take away, or to aboliſh that law, this muſt have been to give men a licenſe to commit all manner of ſin; which is the moſt unbecoming idea of chriſtianity that can be, and ought to be rejected with the greateſt abhorrence. Our Saviour *came to fulfil it* by his example, and to anſwer the ſanction of it by his ſufferings, and thus to recommend holineſs both by his ſufferings, and his obedience. He came to

[h] Rom. 4. 15.

purify

purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. And *the grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously, and godly in this present evil world* [i].

Thus have I passed thro' the three things which I proposed. In the first place I have shewn you, that the law spoken of in our text, is the moral written law contained in the two tables of the ten commandments. In the second place, that of this law our Saviour himself affirms, and it is confirmed from divers testimonies in the scriptures, that every part and particle of it is established; and *heaven and earth may sooner be dissolv'd, than the least part of it should fail* in its obligation upon us; that every part thereof is *to be fulfilled*, that is, obeyed. And, in the third place, I have shewed you the reasons hereof, from the nature of the law itself, and from the extraordinary manner of its exhibition; and from the scope and design of the gospel, and the absurdities which would arise if it should be supposed that the christian religion dissolves it. It remains that I make an inference or two, and conclude.

[i] Tit. 2. 12, 14.

1. If

1. If it be as you have heard; then it is certain, that thoſe perſons ſubvert the doctrine of our bleſſed Saviour who deny their obligation to the moral law, and pretend that Chriſt hath delivered us from the obligation of it, as ſome have had the confidence to aſſert. As if it did not now oblige us in point of duty; or however, that all the regard we were to have to it, was only to ariſe from a principle of generoſity, ſo as to make ſome thankful returns to God for his favours, but not becauſe we are obliged to it. In anſwer to this abſurd notion, no more needs be added to what hath been already ſaid concerning the eſtabliſhment of the moral law: but however, we may remark the pride and arrogancy of theſe perſons, who would fain fanſy themſelves in ſuch a condition that there is no duty incumbent on them; as if they might act as they pleaſed, and yet incur no guilt. And their great folly, as well as arrogancy, farther appears, in that ſince they pretend nothing can be required of them in a way of duty; conſequently, all that they perform is a ſort of work of ſupererogation, more than is required of them. Thus they who pretend to abdicate all ſort of merit, ſeem to ſeek ſomething or other which may look meritorious: for if they do ſomething more than they are obliged to do, then it may be fairly enough ſaid there is ſomething

of

of merit in what they do. How far is this from the temper which Chriſt requires in his diſciples? who, when they *have done all thoſe things which are commanded them*, are taught to ſay, *we are unprofitable ſervants, we have done that which was our duty to do* [k]; and to acknowledge their imperfections in what they have done. But then it is abſurd, on the other hand, for them to pretend many things are good, as they are performed from a principle of generoſity, but that they are not ſo in point of duty: for if the obligation of the law was taken away, and ſo their conformity to it were not a duty; to what purpoſe ſhould they ſhew their generoſity this way? For if there were no duty, the tranſgreſſion of the law could be no ſin; and if no ſin, God could not be diſpleaſed with them. And then, if they did ſomething conformable to the law, ſeeing it was no duty; what thank could they have from man, or what applauſe from God himſelf? So that according to their notion, good and evil would be things indifferent. So ſtrangely abſurd are men when they abandon this rule which God has laid down in his word; this rule of duty, to which we ought to be conformable under all diſpenſations.

[k] Luke 17. 10.

2. This ſhews how guilty they are who break any part of the moral law, and eſtabliſh principles which may diſpoſe men to do ſo; as thoſe of the Romiſh communion do.

One of theſe laws forbids idolatry, and commands that we ſhould worſhip the only true God, and ſerve him only; and another forbids our worſhiping of images. How do theſe *make void the laws of God by their own traditions*[1], when they multiply to themſelves objects to worſhip, and bow down to graven images, contrary to the expreſs letter of the divine law? Theſe are highly to be reproved, in that they act contrary to the expreſs words of our Saviour, who ſays, that *not one jot or tittle of the law is to paſs away.*

Another inſtance I may give you, in which many others tranſgreſs this righteous rule: and that is, in not obſerving the fourth command according to its preciſe and literal meaning, but impoſing other interpretations upon it, as if at leaſt it were partly vacated and abrogated; when, according to the tenor of the words of Chriſt in our text, it appears to remain ſtill in its full force. It will not be ſufficient for men to ſay it is enough that ſome time be devoted to the worſhip and ſervice of God: for that muſt neceſſarily have been, had there never been any fourth command in the

[1] Mat. 15. 6.

world.

world. It is alſo in vain to ſay that that law requires only a ſeventh part of time, and leaves it to us to determine what part that ſhall be: for God himſelf hath determined that for us, as every one may ſee. Nor will it be to any purpoſe for men to pretend they keep this law, when they keep another day which God hath appointed for work inſtead of the ſabbath, and work on that day which God hath appointed for reſt. Would this be underſtood as a juſt obſervation of a law amongſt men? If a day of faſting or thankſgiving were appointed by publick authority; would it excuſe any who neglected the obſervation of that determinate day, which was appointed by authority, to ſay they kept a day, tho it were not the preciſe day appointed? Would this way of reaſoning do amongſt men? And thus can it be called obedience to the fourth command, to keep another day than that which God hath required therein? Is keeping the firſt day of the week obedience to that law which requires our keeping the ſeventh? Then Jeroboam ſaid well, that he obeyed the law of God in keeping the feaſt on the eighth month, becauſe he kept it on one of the months of the year, tho the law appointed it ſhould be kept on the ſeventh [m]. Men do not trifle ſo in the ob-

[m] 1 Kings 12. 32, 33.

ſervance of human laws: why ſhould they then trifle with the laws of God? Every one underſtands, if ſuch a law requires ſuch a day of the week and month to be obſerved, what the meaning of it is. And why ſhould it be ſuppoſed ſo difficult in this caſe, of keeping the ſabbath, when God ſpeaks in the moſt deciſive terms that can be? Can it be ſuppoſed that this law is partly vacated, or aboliſhed, when our Saviour ſays, that *not one jot or tittle of this law ſhall paſs away: heaven and earth may ſooner paſs away than this law?* Is there any place in the New Teſtament wherein this is preciſely declared to be aboliſhed? On the contrary, did not our Saviour and his own apoſtles practiſe this law punctually and preciſely? Is there any inſtance of the Jews taxing them with the breach of any one of theſe laws, from any fair colour and pretence? It is not therefore a ſufficient excuſe for men to ſay they keep ſome part or ſome parcel of the law, when our Saviour declares the whole is obligatory on us; and *not one jot or tittle of it is to be aboliſhed.* Does not the apoſtle James ſay the ſame thing, and declare, that *he who offends in one point, is guilty of all:* that is, violates the whole law; becauſe it is the ſame authority that enjoins all? I have not time to inſiſt farther on this argument. But I ſuppoſe what hath been ſaid already, is ſufficient

cient to decide the queſtion. For if it be true, as I think hath been proved to you, that the ten commandments are that law which our Saviour ſpeaks of in our text; and if it be true, that *not the leaſt letter*, or *particle of this law ſhall paſs away*; nay, and *that heaven and earth may ſooner paſs away, than this law ſhall fail*; and that this ſignifies that its duration muſt be perpetual thro'out all ages of the world: then it follows, by the cleareſt conſequence that can be, that this precept, among the reſt, muſt have the ſame force and the ſame duration.

The end of the ſecond VOLUME.